



3 3333 08119 6855

REFERENCE

920 Snell

B623283

Boys who became famous

THE CENTRAL CHILDREN'S ROOM
DOTTRELL LIBRARY CENTER
20 WEST 53 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

BOYS WHO
BECAME FAMOUS

HEROES OF ALL TIME

- Mohammed. By EDITH HOLLAND.
Alexander the Great. By ADA RUSSELL, M.A.
Augustus. By RENÉ FRANCIS, B.A.
Alfred the Great. By A. E. MCKILLIAM, M.A.
Thomas Becket. By SUSAN CUNNINGTON.
Jeanne d'Arc. By E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON,
F.R.Hist.S.
Sir Walter Raleigh. By BEATRICE MARSHALL.
William the Silent. By A. M. MIALL.
Marie Antoinette. By ALICE BIRKHEAD, B.A.
Boys who Became Famous. By F. J. SNELL.
Oliver Cromwell. By ESTELLE ROSS.
Peter the Great. By ALICE BIRKHEAD, B.A.
The Girlhood of Famous Women. By F. J.
SNELL.
Garibaldi and his Red-Shirts. By F. J. SNELL.
Robert Louis Stevenson. By AMY CRUSE.
Queen Victoria. By E. GORDON BROWNE, M.A.
Anselm. By E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON, F.R.Hist.S.
Sir Walter Scott. By AMY CRUSE.
William the Conqueror. By RENÉ FRANCIS, B.A.
Julius Caesar. By ADA RUSSELL, M.A.
Buddha. By EDITH HOLLAND.
Queen Elizabeth. By BEATRICE MARSHALL.
Warwick the King-maker. By RENÉ FRANCIS,
B.A.
Abraham Lincoln. By EDITH L. ELIAS, M.A.
William Caxton. By SUSAN CUNNINGTON.
Cardinal Wolsey. By RENÉ FRANCIS, B.A.
Charles the First. By A. E. MCKILLIAM, M.A.
George Washington. By ADA RUSSELL, M.A.
George Stephenson. By RUTH MAXWELL, M.A.

Many other volumes in active preparation

BOYS WHO BECAME FAMOUS

BY

F. J. SNELL

AUTHOR OF

'THE GIRLHOOD OF FAMOUS WOMEN' 'GARIBALDI' ETC.

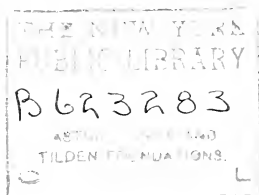
ILLUSTRATED BY

PATTEN WILSON AND CHRIS. AMBLER



GEORGE G. HARRAP & COMPANY LTD.
LONDON CALCUTTA SYDNEY

First published January 1914
by GEORGE G. HARRAP & Co.
39-41 Parker Street, Kingsway, London, W.C.2
Reprinted: August 1916; June 1920; January 1924



Preface

IN putting together the following sketches of boys destined to become famous, care has been taken to select examples with some body in them—examples, that is to say, affording substantial interest in the way of narrative.

I am acquainted with at least one work bearing a similar title in which a few disconnected anecdotes form the prelude to a disproportionate amount of matter regarding the later years and ultimate attainments of the subjects. This, I venture to think, is to disappoint expectation and usurp the place of maturer biographies.

On the other hand, I have indicated—not, perhaps, that it has been generally needful—the different spheres in which those who here figure as boys finally made their mark. If this modest work should induce its readers to explore at large the fascinating regions of which hardly more than the margins have been touched, it will achieve an extremely useful purpose.

The types represented display considerable variety—morally, good, bad, and indifferent; intellectually, clever, backward, and middling. All had not the same advantages, and some abused the advantages they had. Most frequently there are signs of a brilliant future, but not always—certainly, not always of that particular future. Is it too much to hope that this circumstance will persuade boys to behave with greater forbearance toward their less attractive

Boys who Became Famous

fellows? Whether they do so or not, they may live to discover that some whom they despised, and on whom they bestowed unlovely nicknames, have joined the company of the immortals.

Most of the material has been gathered from standard works that do not need to be specified, but I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to some recent, or comparatively recent, publications, including *The Life of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, by the present peer; *The Life of George Frederick Watts*, by Mrs Watts; *The Youth of George Washington*, by Dr Weir Mitchell; the writings of the late Mr F. G. Kitton; M. Raoul Postel's *Bertrand du Guesclin et son Époque*; and Mr Albert Bigelow Paine's *Mark Twain*.

F. J. SNELL

Contents

| CHAP. | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------------|------|
| I. JOHANN WOLFGANG MOZART | 11 |
| II. THOMAS LAWRENCE | 17 |
| III. THOMAS DE QUINCEY | 24 |
| IV. LOUIS DOMINIC CARTOUCHE | 31 |
| V. GEORGE GORDON BYRON | 39 |
| VI. JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE | 47 |
| VII. HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN | 57 |
| VIII. HUMPHRY DAVY | 65 |
| IX. THOMAS CHALMERS | 72 |
| X. NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE | 80 |
| XI. CHARLES LAMB | 87 |
| XII. GEORGE CRUICKSHANK | 95 |
| XIII. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN | 102 |
| XIV. GEORGE FREDERIC WATTS | 114 |
| XV. BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN | 124 |
| XVI. ALFRED TENNYSON | 132 |
| XVII. CHARLES DICKENS | 143 |
| XVIII. GEORGE WASHINGTON | 156 |
| XIX. JOHN RUSKIN | 166 |
| XX. WALTER SCOTT | 175 |
| XXI. SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS | 185 |

Illustrations

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN IS ARMED BY THE | |
| KNIGHT | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| | PAGE |
| MOZART AND THE CONCERTO | 12 |
| CARTOUCHE AND THE HONEY | 32 |
| HANS ANDERSEN DANCES | 60 |
| DAVY—AND AN EXPLOSION | 70 |
| NAPOLEON AT BRIENNE | 84 |
| THE BOY DICKENS ORDERS A GLASS OF THE VERY | |
| BEST ALE | 150 |
| WASHINGTON AND THE NEGRO | 164 |
| WALTER SCOTT'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO PERCY'S | |
| <i>RELIQUES</i> | 180 |

CHAPTER I : *Johann Wolfgang Mozart*

MOST boys can remember a time when they laid violent hands on the family piano, more perhaps as an unholy experiment than with any idea of serious study. They can remember also that the instrument did not prove amiable, did not at once respond to their efforts to extract the effects of which it is capable under the spell of a trained musician. Now what would they think of a youngster who seemed to do by instinct or intuition all that is usually accomplished by years of study and practice? Their verdict would surely be, 'He is a prodigy, and has a great future before him.' Such a boy was Mozart—Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart. His friends, of course, did not call him by all these names. As a child, he was known as 'Woferl'—evidently manufactured out of the third, Wolfgang.

Mozart was born in January, 1756, and his father, Leopold Mozart, was Vice-Master in the Prince-Bishop's chapel at Salzburg. The latter was a violinist and gave lessons in musical theory, so that this was no doubt a case of inherited talent raised to a higher expression. The boy was hardly out of the cradle when he showed signs of remarkable genius. Woferl had a sister, Mannerl, rather older than himself, who was learning the harpsichord, the mother of the modern piano: and as her fingers fled over the keys, the three-year-old would throw aside his toys

Boys who Became Famous

and listen. When she had done, he would take her place and amuse himself with a quest for 'thirds,' bursting into a loud laugh as often as he found them. His father taught him some easy pieces, such as minuets, and in half an hour he could play any of them. After that, he was set to practise the harpsichord in good earnest.

One day his father surprised him with pen and paper. Desperately excited, he kept plunging his pen into the ink, and his manuscript was disfigured with huge blots smudged out each time with his finger. His father wanted to know what he was doing, and why he was crying.

'It is a concerto for the harpsichord,' sobbed the boy, 'but I haven't quite finished it, and the writing is so bad.'

'A concerto for the harpsichord!' exclaimed Leopold Mozart, incredulously. 'That's good, I must say. But come, let us look at this wonderful concerto.'

The manuscript was handed to him, and he proceeded to examine it. The smile soon vanished from the father's face. Through all the blots, amid all the scratches, the idea of the concerto stood out perfectly distinct, and, what was more, the rules of composition were correctly observed. The piece had only one fault, which was a curious one—it was excessively difficult! Up to that time Woferl had received no lessons whatever in harmony and counterpoint, and, apart from such knowledge as he may have gleaned from his father's conversation with



Johann Wolfgang Mozart

pupils, was a complete stranger to the mysteries of thorough bass.

To say that Leopold Mozart was proud of his son is to state but part of the truth. He was ambitious that the boy's almost miraculous gifts should be displayed in the highest quarters; and so, in the spring of 1762, he set off with his two children for Munich, where they met with a kind welcome from the Elector of Bavaria. A few months later they visited Vienna. Here Woferl carried all before him. He was petted by the Emperor Francis, kissed by the Empress-Dowager, Maria Theresa, and had for companions the Archduchesses, one of whom is related to have helped him up when he slipped on the polished floor of the palace. This young princess was Marie Antoinette, afterwards the unhappy Queen of France.

The next capital to be invaded was Paris, where similar favours were awaiting them. The King, Louis XV, was extremely gracious, and Woferl was idolized by the Queen, who on one occasion let him eat off her plate. Woferl's manners were engaging, and must have commended him to royalty. Meanwhile his performances were astonishing. A lady asked him if he would accompany an Italian song, which she was to sing from memory, without looking at her. Woferl assented, sat down at the piano and played the accompaniment almost faultlessly. The song was repeated, when he played the air with his right hand and the bass with his left. Altogether, the piece was given ten or a dozen times, and each time with a varied accompaniment.

Boys who Became Famous

Whilst at Paris, the seven-year-old Mozart composed and published four sonatas for the harpsichord and violin, styling himself on the title-page, and by good right, master of music.

In the following year the family travelled to London. King George and Queen Charlotte were not a whit behind their French cousins in kindness and affability, and a succession of fashionable concerts brought in that harvest of gold on which Leopold Mozart had counted as the fruit of their residence in England.

Among those who heard the young musician was Dr Burney, who declared that few professors at forty could rival the taste, facility and invention of his impromptu playing. One evening the boy was in the company of some professors when he drew at random from a heap of instrumental parts the bass of one of Handel's songs. Guided by this, he reconstructed the piece. The melody was charming, and in every sense the improvisation compared favourably with the original music, the mature production of a distinguished composer. The younger Bach was of the party, and he was so overcome with emotion that he caught Woferl in his arms and kissed him.

The fame of young Mozart spread to Holland, and the Prince of Orange sent an invitation to the family, pressing them to visit his country—as they did.

Unfortunately, the strain of so many exhibitions told on the health of the children—Woferl's especially. However, they recovered and gave two concerts at Amsterdam, after which they returned to Salzburg

Johann Wolfgang Mozart

and were received with thunderous acclamations by the delighted citizens.

The days of miracles were not yet passed. Already known as the Little Sorcerer, Mozart maintained his reputation by fresh and brilliant surprises. One of his father's pupils was a violinist named Wenzl, who, with his friend Schactner, called one evening to try over six trios of his own composition. Just as the 'fiddlers three' were about to commence, Woferl asked that he might play the second violin. His father was annoyed and sent him from the room, but the visitors interceded, and Woferl was readmitted and granted his desire. Hardly a dozen bars had been played, when Schactner set down his violin, dumbfounded at the beauty and accuracy of Woferl's phrasing. Having thus proved his merit, he was promoted to the first violin and retained that position through the whole of the six trios. What makes this achievement so extraordinary is that the boy had not only not been taught, but, apparently, had not even studied for himself the art of bowing and the formation of intervals on the strings. Naturally, his fingering was eccentric, but time, tone, and expression were faultless.

In 1766 Mozart composed an opera, *La Finta Semplice*, and it was hoped that this might be produced at Vienna. The jealousy of older musicians killed the project, and Mozart was forced to be content with the acceptance of a Mass for the Church of the Orphans in the Austrian capital.

Four years later the boy found himself in Italy,

Boys who Became Famous

where he was subjected to severe tests, but could not complain of unfair or ungenerous usage.

It was Holy Week. On the Wednesday Mozart made his way to the Sistine Chapel at Rome, and heard a miserere by Allegri. This work was carefully guarded, no one being allowed to take a copy. Mozart, however, carried it away in his head, and, having returned to his lodging, wrote it out at length. On the Friday he again entered the chapel with the score concealed in his hat, so that, on a second hearing, he might correct any errors. On Easter Sunday he played the miserere to the Master of the Chapel. Salaceti was petrified. Without his knowledge it was impossible that a copy should be made of the composition, and here was a young stranger in full possession of the forbidden music! It was a long and complicated work, divided between two choirs, which sang the verses by turn until they arrived at the finale, where they combined. Interspersed were solos, etc. It would be difficult to parallel such a feat of memory. We must not forget to add that Mozart's copy was afterwards compared with the original. They were exactly the same!

It is foreign to our purpose to trace Mozart's career beyond this point, but it is excusable to remark that his reputation as a composer never stood higher than at present. One proof of the fact is a recent publication on his operas, including *La Finta Semplice* before mentioned.

CHAPTER II:

Thomas Lawrence

THOMAS LAWRENCE, artist, was born at Bristol in May, 1769, and he was the youngest of a family of sixteen, all of whom, with three exceptions, died in infancy. His mother's maiden name was Read, and she was distantly related to the famous Clive. From the first the boy was passionately devoted to her, and this filial attachment, far more than a perfectly honourable and legitimate ambition, made him strive to excel. It lay upon his conscience as a supreme obligation to provide for her and his sisters—and he did.

Transport yourself in imagination to the winter of 1775-6, and the Black Bear Inn at Devizes. Enter the large smoking-room, and let it be on the evening of a market-day, when the room will be thronged with ruddy-faced farmers, sipping hot brandy and water and eagerly discussing the rise in prices. Presently there is a lull in the conversation, and the landlord seizes the opportunity for a sudden *coup*. For a full quarter of an hour he has been gliding in and out of the room, like a restless phantom; now he speaks up: 'If you please, gentlemen, I will introduce my son to your notice.'

The middle-aged, gentlemanly host flings open the door, catches up a nice, well-dressed little boy who has been standing outside, and plants him on a table. Then he speaks again: 'Here is my son, gentlemen. Shall he recite poetry, or shall he take someone's portrait?'

Boys who Became Famous

Usually the answer comes in the form preferred by the innkeeper—that of an order for a portrait. Some of his customers have not yet enjoyed the sensation of seeing themselves in water-colours, framed and glazed, and the charge is quite low—two or three shillings, perhaps. The boy can hit off a likeness in a few minutes, so that his patrons have not long to wait for the expected pleasure. If poetry is in demand, the choice is almost invariably *Lycidas*.

What about the father? Decidedly, he was no ordinary publican. He was an educated and even a talented man, but he had a positive genius for mismanagement, and, try as he might, could not get on. Properly, he was an attorney. Not having succeeded in his profession, he had turned editor, poet, actor, reciter, customs' officer, and farmer. In all these various lines he had failed as completely as in the law; and not long before he had become the tenant of the 'Black Bear.' This inn was proverbial for the flourishing condition of its landlords, but Lawrence proved an exception.

It is often said that 'the boy is father of the man,' and the statement is as true of the publican's son as of most other boys. The prophets, however, were perplexed by his twofold promise. Among the rest was Garrick, who sometimes visited the West of England, and, when in the neighbourhood of Devizes, made a point of listening to the boy's recital of dramatic and other pieces. After hearing him repeat a new speech, the great actor would pat him on the head, and exclaim with delight, 'Bravely done,

Thomas Lawrence

Tommy! Now, which will you be, I wonder—an actor or a painter?’

It was a serious question, on which ‘Tommy’ bestowed much earnest thought. Similar compliments were showered on him by other eminent men, and as most of them praised the little actor no less than the little artist, we can hardly wonder at the boy’s dilemma. Prince Hoare, having heard him recite *Lycidas* and inspected his drawings of hands and eyes, commended both accomplishments. Fuseli, the famous portrait-painter and art-critic, went the length of saying that the eyes shown him were equal to Titian’s; and another admirer, the Hon. Daines Barrington, declared that he copied historical pictures in a masterly style and read blank verse exceedingly well.

Nothing has been said about Master Lawrence’s artistic education, for the simple reason that he appears to have had none. A clergyman named Kent lent him a copy of Rogers’ *Lives of Foreign Painters*, with the kind intention of ‘opening his eyes,’ and told his father in the most friendly manner that such wonderful gifts ought to be properly cultivated. The innkeeper did not agree. The boy, he maintained, had genius enough to do without teachers. At the same time no harm would result from a visit to the picture gallery at Corssham House, the seat of the Methuen family, and a view of the old masters might even be beneficial in aiding the development of his son’s talents. Accordingly he gave his consent to ‘Tommy’s’ being taken to see them. In the col-

Boys who Became Famous

lection was a Rubens, and as he gazed on it, the boy remarked, 'Ah, I shall never paint like that!' However, availing himself of his new privilege, he set himself to copy 'Peter denying Christ' and other pictures that attracted him, and that he did not do badly in these attempts is evident from the verdict of Daines Barrington before quoted.

The boy was about eleven years of age when the inevitable collapse occurred at the 'Black Bear.' His father then fell back on the only resource left to him—'Tommy,' whom he took to Oxford. The experiment proved in every way successful. The young artist made plenty of money, and his patrons were either 'dons' or people of position. The consequence was that, when he and his father moved to Bath, it was found that his fame had preceded them, and residents in that fashionable city competed for the chance of sitting to him.

Ere long the artist's fee for a portrait in crayons or water-colours was raised from one to two guineas, but this led to no slackening in the stream of callers. Every day hordes of ladies modishly attired in red jackets, with hat and feather, thronged to the house, eager to sit to and talk with the marvellous boy, who, in addition to his gifts as a painter, was reported to be singularly handsome. Sir Henry Harpur was so impressed with his talent that he offered the lad's father a thousand pounds to defray the cost of his education in Italy. Mr Lawrence at once declined. Now that he had lost his own means of a livelihood, he could not spare the breadwinner, who, for his part,

Thomas Lawrence

had no wish to profit by the generous offer. He had earned sufficient to bring his mother to Bath, and was supporting her in comfort, while he had placed his sisters at boarding-schools. He could not dream of imperilling this happy state of things for a purely selfish advantage.

In every sense, Lawrence was unquestionably gaining ground. He painted a portrait of Mrs Siddons as Zara (Voltaire's *Zaire*) which was deemed good enough to be engraved; and he was encouraged to send a copy of 'The Transfiguration' on glass to the London Society of Arts. Having been executed two years before, this was not eligible for exhibition, but his talent was appreciated, and, as a consolation, he was presented with a silver palette and a sum of five guineas. By this time everybody in Bath was convinced that London was longing to see him, and it was decided at a family conclave to migrate to the Metropolis.

Strangely enough, the doubt that had existed in young Lawrence's mind with reference to his future career had not been quieted. Though he was doing extremely well with his palette and pencils, he fancied he might do yet better on the stage. Probably he had not forgotten Garrick's praise, and he may have known that Mrs Siddons was making enormous sums by her acting—sums beside which his own gains appeared paltry.

His father was alarmed and determined to put an end to his hesitation once for all. He confided his difficulty to Mr Palmer, the manager of the Bath

Boys who Became Famous

Company, and an actor named Bernard, both of whom shared his opinion that it would be the greatest folly in the world for the boy to relinquish his profession. As a preventative Bernard suggested a private rehearsal of *Venice Preserved*, in which the aspirant was to take the part of Jaffier, while Bernard, with the book in his hand, was to represent the other characters, Belvidera, Priuli, etc., and act as prompter throughout. Lawrence had a particular liking for the rôle assigned to him, in which he thought he excelled.

The rehearsal took place, and 'Jaffier' acquitted himself very well until, in a scene with Priuli, he came to the words :

*I brought her—gave her to your despairing arms—
Indeed, you thanked me, but——*

'Tommy' could get no further. 'But,' he repeated—'but.' He glanced at the prompter, but Bernard's mind appeared to be wandering. Blushing to the roots of his hair, the boy cudgelled his brains for the remainder of the speech. It would not come back to him, and what Priuli had said or done after his expression of gratitude was a complete blank to him. He was still stammering 'but' when his father and Mr Palmer burst into the room, laughing unmercifully. They declared the boy would never make an actor. 'You play Jaffier, Tom!' cried his father; 'hang me if I think they'd allow you to murder a conspirator.' Bernard concurred; and, as his judges were unanimous, and apparently sincere, in condemning him, the poor lad felt he must bow to

Thomas Lawrence

their decision. But he did so with reluctance, and was never persuaded that his notions were wrong.

On his way to town Lawrence made some stay at Salisbury, where he drew a number of portraits in crayons and lined his pockets with fees. Arriving in London at the age of seventeen, he engaged handsome rooms in Leicester Fields. He had not been long in his new quarters before he satisfied himself that success was only a question of time. 'Except Sir Joshua,' he wrote to his mother, 'for the painting of a head, I would peril my reputation against any other painter in London.'

On September 13, 1787, Lawrence made his first appearance at the Royal Academy, where his drawings, 'The Fighting Gladiator' and 'Apollo Belvedere,' easily distanced all competitors. In due course he became President and received the honour of knighthood. No portrait-painter of his time was more eagerly sought after or more highly remunerated; and to this day he keeps his place as one of the most famous of British artists.

CHAPTER III: *Thomas De Quincey*

A MAN who writes his own history with the title of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, and writes it so well that it has been called the most classical of autobiographies—such a man may be expected to have been remarkable as a boy, and Thomas De Quincey was never dull or commonplace. Born on August 15, 1785, he was the son of a Manchester merchant, who died of consumption at the age of thirty-nine; and Thomas, then about seven years old, was placed under the care of four guardians.

He was sent to various schools—amongst others, Bath Grammar School, which had good reason to be proud of him. “I was very early distinguished,” he tells us, “for my knowledge of Greek. At thirteen I wrote Greek with ease; and at fifteen my knowledge of that language was so great that I not only composed Greek verses in lyric metres, but could converse in Greek fluently and without embarrassment—an accomplishment which I have not since met with in any scholar of my times.”

He acquired this knack by turning paragraphs from the newspapers into the best Greek he could think of at the moment; and, having to ransack his memory for equivalent terms, or, where these failed, to exercise his ingenuity for roundabout phrases, he greatly increased his stock of words and gained an elasticity in the use of the language probably never

Thomas De Quincey

equalled in modern days. 'That boy,' said one of his masters, pointing him out to a stranger, 'could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I could address an English one.' By ill luck he was assigned to a jealous and incompetent dominie, whom he bluntly describes as a 'blockhead.' A box on the ear brought on an illness, which obliged him to return home, and Bath School saw him no more.

After that he was educated for a time privately, and then placed in a school at Winkfield, where he stayed a year.

Thomas De Quincey was friendly with the boyish Lord Westport, whom he accompanied on a visit to Ireland. There he had what he calls a 'revelation'—in other words, he fell in love with a fine young woman of twenty. Marriage was not in the question, although De Quincey was one of those whom 'Time lags withal.' He wanted to proceed direct to Oxford, but his guardians argued that, after three years spent at Manchester, he would be eligible for a scholarship, which would reduce the cost of his college education.

At the Manchester Grammar School De Quincey had as good a prospect as could be found anywhere. He himself speaks of it as 'a great school on an ancient foundation,' and the master, he admits, was 'a sound, well-built scholar.' But the boy could not forget the Etonian brilliancy of his favourite master at Bath, and his own talents made him critical. The first form was composed of three pupils—De Quincey and two others; and all three

Boys who Became Famous

were better Grecians than the headmaster. They did not dream of opening their books till called upon to translate, and meanwhile spent their time in writing epigrams on the master's wig and similar topics. When De Quincey entered the form, the author that was being studied was Sophocles, the choruses of whose plays are generally supposed to tax the attention even of ripe scholars. It is, therefore, easy to imagine what a plague these young Crichtons must have been to the honest pedagogue, conscientiously striving to grasp the meaning of passages which had no obscurity for *them* !

De Quincey's class-mates were not in so good a position as himself, and with them the boon of a university career depended on the headmaster's recommendation for a scholarship. The merchant's son, on the contrary, could keep himself at Oxford without help from charity, and he was restless to be off. Again he appealed to his guardians, but could not induce them to alter their decision. Summer was advancing, his seventeenth birthday was not far off, and De Quincey vowed to himself that, come what might, he would cease to attend school after that date. He seems to have pondered the situation carefully, and, as he could do nothing without money, wrote to a young lady of rank, whom he had known from childhood, asking her to lend him five guineas. For upward of a week his note remained unanswered, and De Quincey was beginning to be alarmed, when, to his great relief, a servant placed in his hand a double letter with a coronet on the seal. The reply

Thomas De Quincey

was kind and obliging. Instead of five guineas she sent him ten, and hinted that, if they were never repaid, it would not spell bankruptcy for her. De Quincey had saved about two guineas, and with this addition, felt himself the possessor of a small fortune—enough, at any rate, for his purpose, which was to run away.

On that point his mind was quite made up, but he foresaw and regretted the inconvenience that would be caused to others, and even to himself his departure was something of a wrench. This is how he speaks :—
“ At night, when the muster-roll of names was called over, and mine, as usual, was called first, I stepped forward, and passing the headmaster, who was standing by, I bowed to him and looked earnestly in his face, thinking to myself, ‘ He is old and infirm, and in this world I shall never see him again.’ He looked at me complacently, smiled good-naturedly, returned my salutation, and we parted. I could not reverence him intellectually, but he had been uniformly kind to me and had allowed me many indulgences, and I grieved at the mortification I should inflict upon him.”

De Quincey boarded in the headmaster’s house, and among the indulgences allowed him was the exclusive use of an apartment which served at once as a bedroom and a study. This privilege he had enjoyed from the beginning.

The morning had arrived when he was to put his design into execution. He rose at half-past three. It was the month of July, not a cloud flecked the sky, and the ancient towers on which he gazed with

Boys who Became Famous

deep emotion were tinged with a faint crimson. Having dressed, De Quincey took his hat and gloves—and then lingered. For eighteen months he had read and studied in that ‘pensive citadel’; and on looking back, he was obliged to confess that he had passed many gracious hours in the company of his beloved books. The last object on which he fixed his gaze was a lovely portrait suspended over the mantelpiece; it might have been that of his patron saint. Stepping up to the picture, he kissed it, after which he stole quietly out of the room, not forgetting to close the door behind him.

Now De Quincey’s bedroom was situated in the top-story, and one of his problems had been the removal of his trunk, which contained not only his clothes, but nearly all his library. Fortunately, he was well liked by the servants, and had been promised the help of a groom. On being summoned, the man proceeded on his errand, whilst De Quincey waited at the foot of the last flight of stairs, in much suspense and trepidation.

Presently the groom was heard descending with steps slow but firm, until he had almost come to the corridor, when he was seized with a sudden fit of nervousness and slipped. His burden crashed to the ground with a sound of thunder and bounded against the headmaster’s door. De Quincey thought the game was up, but he resolved to stand his ground and abide the sequel. As for the groom, he was considerably alarmed, but the humour of the thing so tickled his fancy that he broke into a loud and

Thomas De Quincey

long laugh, in which De Quincey was forced to join. Their merriment seems to have had the effect of reassuring the excellent schoolmaster, who probably imagined that some comic accident had occurred about which there was no occasion to bother himself. Anyhow, not a sound proceeded from the interior of the chamber.

Emboldened by the silence, the groom again seized the trunk, hoisted it on to his shoulders, and bore it down into the hall without further mishap. De Quincey saw it deposited on a wheelbarrow *en route* to the carrier's, and forthwith entered on his travels. It was his intention to journey on foot, and he carried under his arm a small parcel of clothes. In one pocket he had a favourite English poet, and in the other a duodecimo volume of Euripides. He was a highly intellectual vagabond.

The escapade turned out a tragic blunder. At first he thought he would go to Westmorland, but he changed his mind and directed his course to North Wales. After a tour in Denbighshire, Merionethshire, and Carnarvonshire, he took lodgings in a country town. His landlady, who had been a servant in the family of a certain bishop, and was very proud of the fact, was warned by his lordship against harbouring a person who had no visible means of subsistence, and might, for aught she knew, be a swindler. 'Betty' reported the conversation to De Quincey, who was highly offended and refused to stay another hour.

Within a fortnight funds began to run low, and

Boys who Became Famous

he was forced to limit himself to one regular—not very ample—meal a day. Soon he had to dispense even with that, and dine off wild berries. His only chance of procuring more substantial nourishment was by rendering little services at hospitable homesteads. At the village of Llan-y-styndw he remained three whole days with three brothers and four sisters, acting as their private secretary. For one of the brothers, who had been a seaman, he made out a claim for prize-money, and for the girls he wrote love-letters. Alas! on the fourth day, the parents, a grim old couple, returned from an annual meeting of Methodists. They eyed the stranger suspiciously, and he deemed it best to take himself off.

For his act of folly, De Quincey had already been well punished, but his sufferings on the Welsh Mountains are not to be compared with those he underwent in pitiless London. Over these we are disposed to draw a veil. Suffice it to say that for sixteen weeks his food consisted of a few morsels of bread, doled out at uncertain intervals from the breakfast-table of an individual who believed him to be ill! All the while De Quincey, it seems, might have escaped the pangs of hunger and other troubles by keeping in touch with his guardians, but his obstinacy or pride would not let him.

CHAPTER IV : *Louis Dominic Cartouche*

THERE are all sorts of boys, as there are all sorts of men. In Thomas De Quincey we have an instance of an extremely foolish boy ; Louis Dominic Cartouche was an extremely bad boy, and when he grew up, became an extremely bad man. He has left a name as the most famous, or notorious, gentleman-highwayman of France. There was a time when boys were allowed to sit up reading the *Newgate Calendar*. The writer's father told him that, when in his teens, he was in the habit of regaling himself with the lives of criminals recorded in that gloomy work ; and Sir Samuel Romilly informs us that, as a child, he got many a nightmare through wallowing in its pages. We do not think that an undiluted course of such reading is quite wholesome, but a record of the little thief, almost unique, may serve to amuse. We will not insult the reader with the hypocritical suggestion that it is full of warning !

Louis Dominic was born in a quarter of Paris called the Courtille in 1693—according to one account ; another version states, in the Marais, two years later. His parents, who were respectable, sent him to the College of Clermont, and the Jesuits in charge of the seminary taught him not only the classics, but theology. Much good it did him ! A born thief, he soon showed the stuff he was made of by making a swoop of his school-fellows' nightcaps—six score—

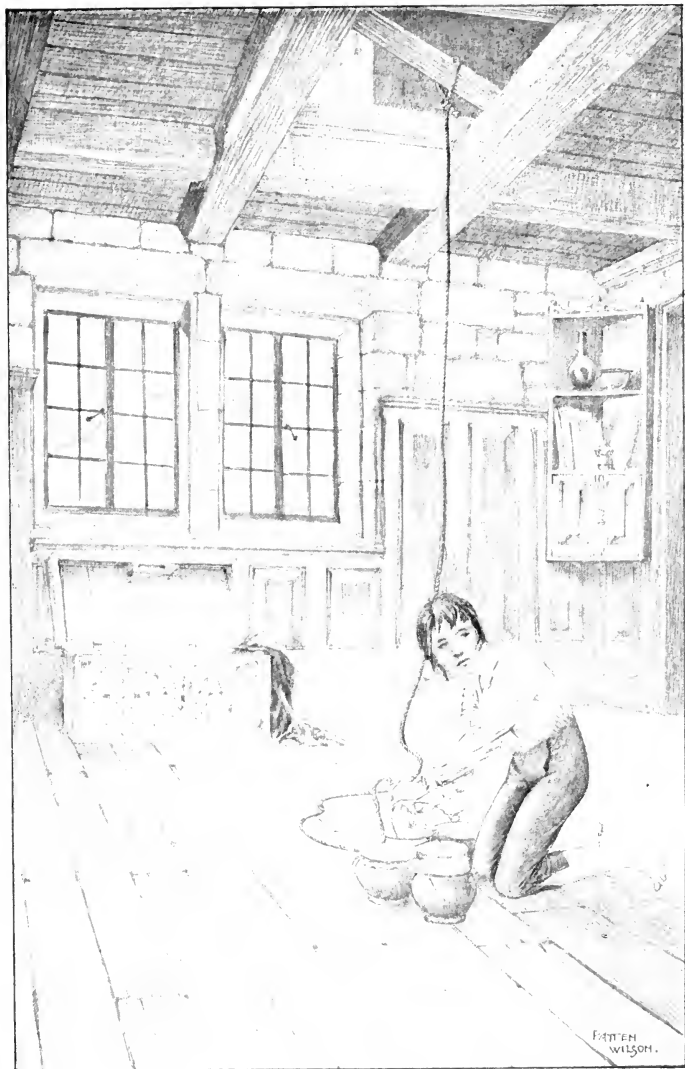
Boys who Became Famous

and selling them. He forgot, however, to include his own; and, as he was the only boy in the school possessing a nightcap, suspicion at once fell upon him. Being fond of dainties, he turned his attention to the apple-women and cooks who visited the college—not always to rob them. As often as not, he obtained his requirements by exchange, handing over his school-fellows' knives, books, rulers, playthings, anything in return for tarts and gingerbread.

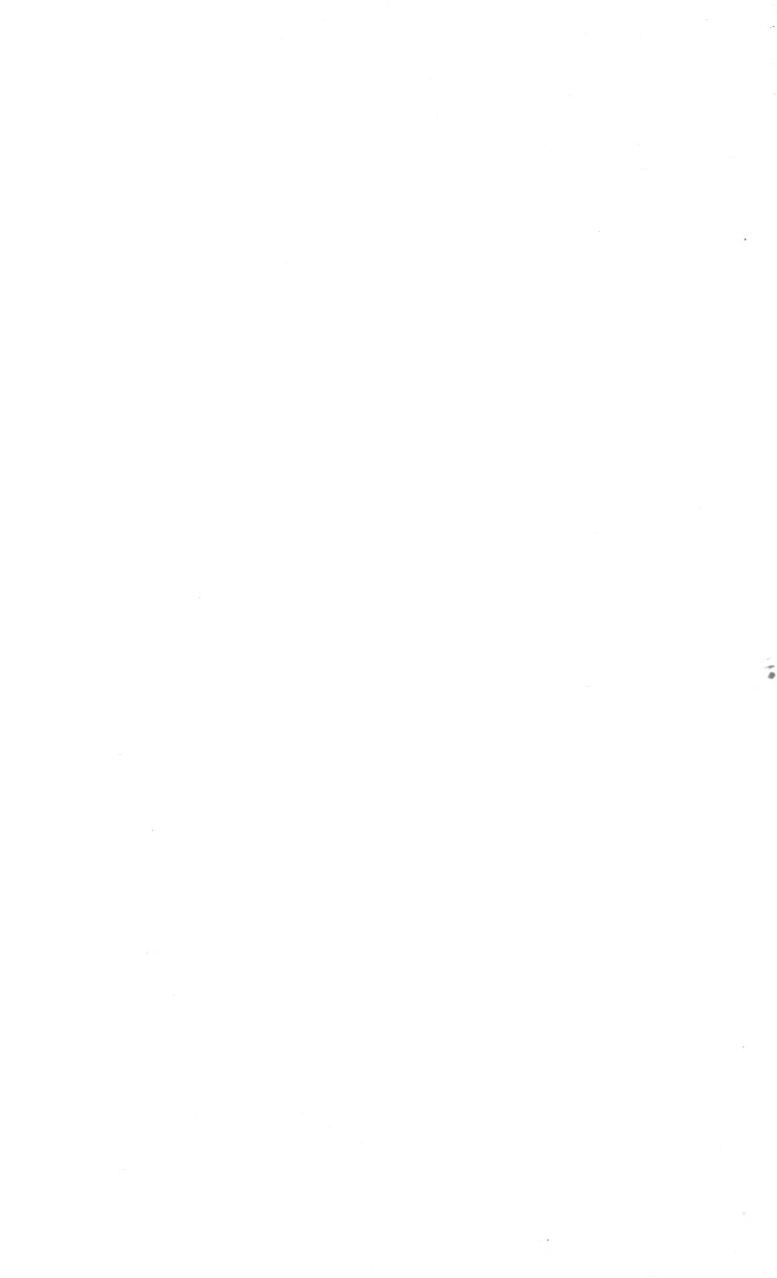
The nightcap affair had been pretty dangerous, and Cartouche had only escaped by the skin of his teeth. Not long afterward, however, it came to his knowledge that the principal of the college had received some pots of Narbonne honey, and the young reprobate felt he must have them. To steal them was no easy matter, as they were placed in a room behind that of the principal's sleeping apartment. The room had no chimney, and the windows looked into a court which was guarded by a porter at night, and through which crowds of people passed by day.

The honey-pots seemed safe enough, but Cartouche did not despair. Over the principal's rooms were empty garrets divided from them by large beams, across which were laid rude planks. Having removed some of these planks, Cartouche descended by a rope, fastened other ropes round the necks of the pots, and then returned to the upper story. This done, he hauled up the pots, replaced the planks, and made off with his booty.

And now a great surprise awaited him. Digging



Cartouche and the Honey



Louis Dominic Cartouche

his spoon into one of the pots, he fished up a couple of louis d'or, and he presently found ninety-eight more, mixed up with the honey. The fact was, the principal had broken the rules of his order by having in his possession a larger sum of money than he was allowed, and he had concealed the coin in what might have appeared a most unlikely place—the honey-pots. With the proceeds of his enterprise Louis Dominic bought himself fine suits of clothes; and, when he went home, his parents asked him the meaning of it. He explained that a young nobleman had conceived a liking for him and *given* him a couple of suits. His father, in the gratitude of his heart, set off to wait on the young nobleman—supposed to be a schoolfellow of his son—but, on inquiry, he found this benefactor was imaginary. Thereupon Louis Dominic took refuge in silence. It was not worth while to invent more lies.

As on the previous occasion, Cartouche did not display sufficient caution. The principal was enraged at the loss of his money, all the more because his mouth was closed on the subject. But his mouth was not closed with regard to the honey, and he caused a strict search to be made, the result being that two empty honey-pots were discovered in the tick of Cartouche's bed. Had he been content to extract the coins without troubling about the honey, the owner might have gnashed his teeth in vain. As it was, it was not to the interest of either party to push matters to extremes, and a compromise was arranged. Cartouche was to return as many of the

Boys who Became Famous

gold pieces as were left, his father was to supply the balance, and the principal was to wink at the offence !

The nature of the next crime committed by the troublesome youth is a little mysterious, but, whether great or small, it seems to have had the effect of using up his father's patience. On the following day he obtained leave to go out, and was met by one of his brothers, who warned him of the terrible fate in store for him whenever he returned home. Cartouche had taken his many floggings and other punishments at school with stoical indifference, but he was now thoroughly alarmed, and rather than face his incensed parent, he resolved to make his own way in the world. So he joined the gipsies, picked pockets on the Pont Neuf, and resorted to other low methods of getting a living.

Louis Dominic had not much reason to be pleased with his vagabond existence. Whatever he did, wherever he went, he suffered the pangs of hunger, and after a while he became ragged as well. One day his uncle, who was a merchant, was walking on the quays of Rouen when he saw a wretched little scarecrow make a dash at some bones and turnip-skins and devour them greedily. On closer inspection he recognized the boy as his nephew. He had heard the worst reports of Louis Dominic, and knew all about the nightcaps and the honey-pots, but his heart overflowed with compassion, and he took the starving lad in his arms and kissed him. Through his uncle's intercession Cartouche was forgiven by his family and for a time appeared truly penitent.

Louis Dominic Cartouche

Unfortunately, when he was sixteen, and a smart strapping fellow for his age, Louis Dominic must fall in love with a washerwoman. She, of course, looked for something more than protestations of affection—new gowns, caps, handkerchiefs, silk stockings, trips into the country, and visits to the play. Such luxuries cost money. Cartouche had none of his own, and his father would not give him any. So it was a question of renouncing the woman or going back to his evil ways. He embraced the latter alternative, and was soon actively employed in relieving pedestrians of their watches and purses. The stolen goods were transferred to a professional receiver, who introduced him to a society of kindred spirits.

Hitherto Cartouche had been satisfied with grieving his relations, but he had now grown so bad that he did not hesitate to inflict a positive and very serious injury upon them. His beautiful sister had been betrothed to a wealthy young man in the provinces. According to the French custom, the marriage had been arranged by the respective parents, and the parties did not see each other until the eve of the wedding, when the gentleman arrived in Paris with his title-deeds, settlements, and a supply of cash. In these circumstances what must Cartouche do but give information to his captain? Late one night the gang proceeded to the house of the bridegroom-elect, got in by the window, and began to file and pick the locks of the great chest containing his property.

The gentleman, who was sleeping in the adjoining

Boys who Became Famous

room, was awakened, and, slipping out of bed, posted himself where he could obtain a full view of what was going on and study the faces of the perpetrators. As he had removed all the money and papers the day before, he was perfectly unconcerned, but the moment they had broken all the locks and found nothing, he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Here, Thomas! John! Officer! Keep the gate, and fire at the rascals!' Startled beyond measure, the thieves, who had no idea that anyone was watching them, jumped out of the window and ran off.

After that Cartouche sedulously avoided his intended brother-in-law, to whom he had not yet been introduced. On the evening before the wedding there was to be a party, consisting of the relations of both families, at the house of the bride's father. The latter insisted on his son's presence; and Cartouche, being forced to comply, not only came himself, but brought with him some of his associates who had shared in the raid on the empty money-chest. This he must have done from a belief that none of them had been seen. Still, he did not feel comfortable, and kept as much as possible out of the bridegroom's way.

At supper he was sneaking to a side-table, when his father called to him, 'Here, Dominic! Come and sit opposite your brother-in-law!' Cartouche obeyed, and his companions seated themselves near him. The bridegroom pledged him in a bumper, and began a speech in which he dwelt on the honour of becoming allied with so estimable and distinguished

Louis Dominic Cartouche

a family. All at once he recognized Cartouche and his two friends as the rogues who had filed his money-chest. Without another word he set down his glass and bolted out of the room, fancying, as he well might, that Cartouche's family were no better than Cartouche himself. As soon as he reached home, he wrote a letter terminating the engagement.

Naturally, the lady's father demanded an explanation, and the gentleman then informed him of his eldest son's exploit. 'You would not have me marry into such a family?' said the late bridegroom. The disgusted father agreed, with shame and sorrow, that there was every justification for the course the gentleman had taken. The next question was what to do with the culprit. One way of dealing with him was to ask for a *lettre de cachet* and have him shut up in the Bastille, but his father did not like to do that. So he resolved to try the effect of a year's discipline in the monastery of St Lazare.

In order to get him there, his father pretended that he was making a contract with the monks, which would require a witness. Entering a coach, they drove to the Rue St Denis, and his father stepped out, saying that he would return in a minute. Just then Cartouche happened to notice half a dozen men posted on the other side of the way, and at once concluded that they were there to arrest him. He had in his pocket a piece of linen snatched that very morning from the door of some shop; and, quick as lightning, he tore it up into three stripes. One he tied round his head, another round his hat, and the

Boys who Became Famous

third round his waist, so as to resemble an apron. He then divested himself of his coat and periwig, and left the carriage—the very image of a cook's boy. The men on guard, completely taken in, made no attempt to stop him, and when his father came back, the only signs of the scapegrace were his coat and wig.

“With that coat and wig,” says Thackeray, “Cartouche left home, father, friends, conscience, remorse, society, behind him,” and became a professional robber. With his subsequent adventures we are not here concerned, but, as a specimen of youthful depravity, he is surely almost, if not quite, without equal.

CHAPTER V: *George Gordon Byron*

WE have marked the 'progresses,' or careers, of a foolish boy and a bad boy. We now complete the trio with an unhappy boy. There are still people obtuse enough to imagine that happiness and high birth are, in some sort, convertible terms. The reverse is often the case. Not that Byron's aristocratic lineage was the cause of his sorrows, or, if so, only indirectly, the truth being that he had a set of queer relations, and queer relations may fall to the lot of any child of man.

To begin with, there was his great uncle from whom he inherited his title, and who, at the time of the poet's birth was living in grim seclusion at Newstead Abbey. There had been a terrible incident in his lordship's past, for he had killed his nephew, Mr Chaworth, of Annesley Hall, and been tried for murder. Although publicly acquitted of the charge, Lord Byron had come out of the affair with a tarnished reputation. It was known that there had been bad blood between the parties, and the sudden duel, or chance-medley, in which Chaworth lost his life, was thought to have too much the appearance of being planned by the vindictive peer.

The poet's father, Captain Byron, was not much better. He was, in the worst possible sense, a man of the world; and one of his crimes was to have dissipated the fortune of his second wife—but he had much else to answer for. However, the boy never

Boys who Became Famous

saw much of him, as he died at Valenciennes about three years after his son's birth. 'The evil that men do lives after them'; and Byron's mother was left with an income of no more than £135 a year. Described as 'a short, fat person,' she was not the sort of woman who could accept her altered circumstances in a spirit of resignation. Her education was imperfect, and she had an ungovernable temper. With a mother of this description, what chance had the boy of being happy?

Mrs Byron came of a good Scottish family. She was the daughter of Mr Gordon of Gight—hence the poet's second name, Gordon. He was born in Holles-street, Cavendish-square, London, on January 22, 1788; and by an unfortunate accident one of his feet was twisted at the moment of birth. At his baptism the sponsors were the Duke of Gordon and Colonel Duff of Feterosso, an ancestor, we believe, of the late Duke of Fife.

His mother was a creature of moods, which varied with startling rapidity. At one moment he was scorned as 'a lame brat'; the second after, he was proudly reminded that he might be a lord. She was liable to 'hurricane rages,' during which she beat and cursed him without stint. But they did not last long, and, when her fury had expended itself, she smothered him with kisses and declared that his eyes were as beautiful as his father's.

Early in 1790 Mrs Byron removed to Scotland; and when five years of age her son was sent to a day-school kept by a man called Bower, at Aberdeen.

George Gordon Byron

In twelve months he had barely succeeded in learning the alphabet, and it was deemed advisable to place him under the care of a minister, the Rev. Mr Ross, who taught him to read. Meanwhile, the son of his mother's shoemaker gave him his first lessons in Latin. Shortly after that, the news arrived of the death of Lord Byron's grandson, which signified that George Gordon had become heir presumptive to an ancient English barony. This improvement in his prospects made it necessary that greater care should be bestowed on his education. He was sent to the Free Grammar School at Aberdeen, and there he still was when, on May 19, 1798, the old lord departed this life, leaving his coronet to the future poet, then a boy of ten.

Byron was very young, and it is easy to understand his elation at his new dignity. 'Mother!' he cried, breaking into the room, where she was sitting, 'do you see any difference? Do I look like a lord?' On the following day, when the boys' names were called over at school, and his own was read out as 'Dominus Byron,' he could not answer *Adsum*, and was so overcome with emotion that he burst into tears.

Byron needed all the consolation obtainable from his new dignity, as he was morbidly sensitive on the subject of his distorted foot and consequent lameness. For that he had probably to thank his mother's cruel recklessness as much as anything, but strangers sometimes dealt a stab at this tender spot. Once he was out with his nurse when they met a lady in the

Boys who Became Famous

street. 'What a pretty boy!' she thoughtlessly exclaimed, 'and what a pity he has such a foot!' Little Byron shook his child's whip at her, and tears of passion started to his eyes, as he made answer, 'Dinna, dinna speak of it!' At other times the bitter consciousness of his defect found expression in a cynical jest. Observing a boy who was lamer than himself, he seized his arm and called out to his mother and other bystanders, 'Come and see the twa laddies with the twa club feet ganging up Broad-street!'

Byron was half a Scot by birth, and wholly one by residence; hence, no doubt, his use of the dialect, if his childish sayings have been correctly reported.

Mrs Byron, as we have noted, was not remarkable for the control of her temper, and this characteristic was inherited by her son, who was subject to what he called 'silent rages.' Speechless fury is fury at white heat—a stage at which it is apt to be mischievous, and even dangerous. One day, when Byron was a mere infant, he was scolded for soiling his frock, and out of resentment, deliberately tore it to rags. He himself records that, at the age of six or seven, a knife was forcibly wrenched from his hand. He had turned it against his own breast! In another fit of mad anger he bit a piece out of a saucer. Such exhibitions are to be deplored, but it does not necessarily follow that Byron was a bad boy. When properly treated he was as good as most boys—perhaps better; and those who had the best opportunities of judging

George Gordon Byron

spoke in his favour. At the time when he was passing out of youth into manhood, Dr Pigot, who had watched him narrowly, pronounced—' Few people understand Byron, but I know that he has naturally a kind and feeling heart, and that he has not a particle of malice in his composition.' On that point his nurse, Mary Gray, who seems to have been Byron's guardian angel, was equally emphatic. The poet always expressed the greatest regard for her, and she in turn was strongly attached to him. As a child, he responded simply and naturally to her gentle overtures, listened to her reading of the Bible, and on her inducement learnt the first and second Psalms by heart. At the height of his fame Byron confessed that the pleasure he derived from the perusal of the Old and New Testament was due almost entirely to the lessons he received from Mary Gray in 1796.

The good woman accompanied Mrs Byron and the new peer—' the little boy from Aberdeen,' as his heir had been styled rather superciliously by the old Lord Byron—to Newstead Abbey, but on their arrival the place was found in such a ruinous condition that they were compelled to take lodgings at Nottingham. Whilst they were residing in that town, an attempt was made to rectify the unfortunate foot, and the boy was handed over to a chiropodist quack called Lavender. The clumsy and ignorant operator did him no good—only tortured him; and Byron's guardian, the Earl of Carlisle, suggested that he should be treated by a celebrated specialist, Dr

Boys who Became Famous

Baillie. For this purpose the family removed to London, and the application of more intelligent remedies was so far successful that Byron wrote to Mary Gray's sister, who had been his first nurse, that he 'had at last got a common boot on.'

In London the boy's teacher was Dr Glennie of Dulwich. This gentleman did his best to correct his pupil's defects, but had to complain of Mrs Byron's capricious interference. This so disgusted Lord Carlisle that he refused to act any longer as her son's guardian.

In 1802 Byron went to Harrow School, which, he says, he hated. There he made a name for himself as the ringleader in all the rows against the masters and townspeople, and paid little heed to the prescribed course of study. He was, however, eager enough in such intellectual pursuits as interested him and developed a taste for oratory. Strange to say, no one suspected him of any gift for poetry; and the headmaster, Dr Drury, thought poorly of his first exercise in English versification—the translation of a chorus from the *Prometheus*.

One of Byron's contemporaries at Harrow was Sir Robert Peel, whose character and attainments he thus compares with his own. "There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all, masters and scholars, and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar, he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor, I was reckoned at least his equal; as a schoolboy out of school, I was always in scrapes, he never; and in school he always knew his

George Gordon Byron

lesson, I rarely, but when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history, etc., I was his superior, as well as of most boys of my standing."

Byron has not mentioned an incident, highly honourable to himself, in which he and Peel were concerned, and that must have occurred soon after his arrival, when he was in his fourteenth year. A brute, whose name has not transpired, had selected Peel as his fag, and when the small boy resisted his authority, gave him a beating. Custom might have excused an ordinary thrashing, but the bully was not content with that, and inflicted a kind of bastinado on the inner and fleshy part of his victim's arm. As he did so, he twisted the limb, so as to cause an extreme degree of pain. Byron, who was standing by, felt it would be of no use to offer to fight the tormentor, but, with mingled rage and sorrow, inquired of him how many blows he proposed to inflict. 'Why, you little rascal? What is that to you?' was the response. 'Because,' said Byron, 'if you please, I will take half.'

As a boy, the poet fell in love with Miss Chaworth, daughter of the man who had perished by the old lord's homicidal violence. His affections were blighted, and the amiable Mrs Byron experienced the cruel satisfaction of breaking to him the news of the young lady's marriage. The relations between mother and son did not improve with the lapse of time, and when Byron had left Harrow for Cambridge, she made nothing of throwing dishes, cups and glasses at him.

Boys who Became Famous

Should such missiles fail, she had recourse to a poker as a weapon !

Byron's boyhood was now over, and, in spite of everything, he regretted it. "One of the deadliest and heaviest feelings of my life," he writes, "was to feel that I was no longer a boy."

CHAPTER VI: *Johann Wolfgang Goethe*

IT is an interesting coincidence that the supreme poet of Germany bore the same Christian names as his countryman Mozart. As will be shown presently, this was not the only bond of resemblance between them, though they grew up in widely different circumstances and may be said to present a strong contrast in talent and disposition. No great writer has left such a detailed account of his boyish years as Goethe, and in many ways it is a fascinating sketch of his early experiences and surroundings. Nevertheless, it is pretty certain that most boys would turn from it with weariness, because it contains so few incidents, and those few decidedly commonplace. We will try to pick out the plums.

Goethe was born at Frankfort-on-the-Main, August 28, 1769. The family resided in an ancient house, which was properly two houses, the partition between them having been removed. For the children the favourite room was the spacious hall with its large timber lattice communicating with the street, which gave it the appearance of a bird-cage. Here they came in contact with the neighbours, among the rest, three grown-up brothers called Von Ochsenstein, who took a great liking for the boy and disported themselves with him in numberless ways. Generally sober and solitary individuals, they egged him on to all sorts of pranks, of which the following is a sample.

A pottery fair had just been held, and the good

Boys who Became Famous

people of the city had not only bought in a stock of such wares for their kitchens, but had purchased similar utensils in miniature as playthings for the children. One fine afternoon, when all was quiet in the house, little Goethe made himself happy in the ground-floor apartment with his pots and dishes, and when he could get no more out of them, pitched one of his toys into the street, where it broke in pieces. The delighted youngster clapped his hands, whereupon the Von Ochsensteins, who had been watching him, cried 'Again!' Without dallying, he dashed first one pot and then another on the pavement till the fragments formed quite a heap. Meanwhile his neighbours kept encouraging him by shouting each time 'Again!' By and by they came out to testify their approval, and the boy was in high glee at having given them so much pleasure. His stock was now used up, but still they cried 'Again!' and Master Goethe, running into the kitchen, fetched down one after another of the earthenware plates, the smashing of which afforded a still more exquisite spectacle. Even then the Von Ochsensteins were not satisfied and would not leave him alone until he had hurled to destruction every utensil he could lay hands on. The mischief was done, and the only compensation was a merry yarn in which those rogues, the authors, exulted to the end of their days.

The house in which the Goethes lived was in a street called Hart-dyke. The children, seeing neither harts nor dykes, were puzzled, and, on asking the meaning of the name, were told that the house occupied

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

a site that had been formerly outside the city-bounds, and that where the street then was, there had been a dyke in which a number of harts had been kept. Every year the corporation had treated themselves to a venison feast, for which, thanks to this precaution, a carcass was always available, even though princes and knights stopped the hunting-privilege of the town, or it was besieged by an enemy. This legend pleased the children mightily, and they only wished that such a preserve of tame deer existed in their day.

Properly speaking, the house belonged to Goethe's paternal grandmother, who lived in a large room built out at the back and adjoining the hall. She was a charming old lady, and the children were very fond of her. Well they might be. She laid herself out to amuse them in all sorts of little ways, and provided many a pleasant surprise in the shape of tit-bits. One Christmas Eve she crowned all her kind actions by having a puppet-show exhibited to them, thus in a sense creating a new world in the old house. This was not only a great attraction at the time, but Goethe considered it had deep and lasting effect upon him. He was destined, when he grew up, to write dramas, and perhaps the germ of this propensity was implanted by his grandmother's Yule-tide favour. But the old lady had not yet done. The small stage with its dumb actors, which at first had only been shown to them, was afterward made over to the children, who were allowed to try their hands on it until they learned to work it in true theatrical fashion. Needless to say, they valued the present most highly,

Boys who Became Famous

and the more because it was the donor's last gift to them. Soon after she was withdrawn from their eyes by increasing infirmity, and then taken away for ever by death.

We wish we could allude with similar appreciation to Goethe's father, but he does not seem to have deserved it. To say the least, he had faulty notions as to the proper treatment of young children, and if his boys and girls had not been fairly strong-minded, his antics would have terrified them out of their wits. The house, as we have said, was old, and, like many old houses, it abounded in recesses. There were dark passages, too, and altogether it was a place fitted to inspire fear and horror in sensitive childish minds. The stern parent, however, did not mind that at all—indeed, he thought it an advantage to inure the children to invisible dangers and objects of dread. They were therefore compelled to sleep alone. Sometimes it was more than they could bear, and, stealing out of bed, they would seek the society of the servants and maids. On such occasions their father, having got himself up as a ghost by donning his night-shirt inside out, barred the way and frightened them back into their dormitory. The proceeding was downright idiotic, for, as Goethe asks, how is it possible to rid people of fear by placing them, so to speak, between two fires?

Although he did not display much wisdom in the matter referred to, the poet's father was a very intelligent and highly educated man, who had travelled in Italy and returned home with an

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

enthusiasm for all things Italian. He devoted a good part of his time to a description of his journeys written in Italian, in which a cheery old native of that country, a teacher of languages called Giovinazzi, was of much assistance to him. The old man did not sing badly, and Goethe's mother, by her husband's orders, had to accompany Signor Giovinazzi daily on the harpsichord. Hence the boy learned to recognize the *Solitario bosco ombroso* and knew it by heart before he understood a word of it. The way Goethe came to learn the language was as follows. His father taught his sister Italian in the same room in which he did his lessons. When he had finished his task, he was not allowed to go away, but had to sit still, in order not to disturb them. So he listened over his book, and in that way he easily acquired a knowledge of Italian, which, he says, pleased him as an agreeable variation of Latin.

We began by stating that Mozart and Goethe had something in common besides the possession of the same Christian names. What was it? It is a common saying that men of genius have nearly always had remarkable mothers. We do not know whether it has ever struck anybody that their fathers have often been able, industrious, and sometimes learned persons without a spark of that quick perception, that creative skill—imagination, originality, call it what you please—which enabled the sons to shine where the good men, their sires, merely strove. A capital instance is supplied by a famous living novelist, whose father was an antiquary not much known beyond the limits of Cornwall.

Boys who Became Famous

Goethe's father had acquired all his learning by assiduous study and application. He knew he had not his son's gifts, and impressed upon him early and late, in jest and in earnest, that, had he been blessed with the same talents, he would have given a much better account of himself. So he made it his business to see that those gifts and those talents were not wasted for lack of oversight and instruction. In fact, he appointed himself his children's tutor, and called in the help of other teachers only at certain hours and for particular subjects.

Goethe considers this amateur schooling a mistake, and that learning, to be worth much, must be imparted by experts. One of the troubles in his case was that he learnt so fast. The result was that he soon outgrew the instruction that could be given him by his father and the other teachers without having been grounded in any subject whatever. Grammar he detested, and he would have learnt precious little of it but for the Latin rhymes, which he hummed and strummed to himself with pleasure. Geography was conveyed in similar verses, which were designed as aids to memory, and, no doubt, answered the purpose. But they were in the worst possible taste. Goethe quotes the following couplet as an illustration :

*Ober Yssel ; viel Morast
Macht das gute Land verhasst.
(Ober Yssel ; much morass
Makes the good land odious.)*

Miserable stuff like that could awaken no interest,

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

but it was otherwise with contemporary German poetry, which Goethe and his companions perused with real enjoyment, and not only perused, but sought to imitate. A kind of mania for rhyming and versification took possession of them, and every Sunday they held an assembly, in which each of them was required to produce lines of his own composing. And now Goethe ran athwart an extraordinary discovery, which for some time caused him considerable uneasiness. Whatever his own poems might be like, he always regarded them as the best. Strange to say, every one of his competitors was equally sure that *his* verse, no matter how lame the metre, was an easy first. Nor was that all. One of his young friends was a good sort of boy, but with no aptitude for such things, who got his tutor to make his rhymes for him, but was under the delusion that he had made them himself, as Goethe learnt from confidential talks between them. These surprising facts and fancies quite upset the budding bard, who began to ask himself whether all was well with his own head—whether, in point of fact, the poems of the other boys were not better than his, and they might not with justice look upon him as mad. The possibility was so appalling that for a time he refrained from writing any more verse, and was not reassured until one day parents and teachers, who had taken note of their proceedings, set them a piece to be done *impromptu*, and Goethe's production was generally commended.

We must add a few words as to the boy's favourite authors, not all of whom were either Germans or

Boys who Became Famous

poets. Thus he read and appreciated Fénelon's *Télémaque*, though in a rather wretched translation. *Robinson Crusoe* was—he says, of course—included betimes, as was also *The Isle of Felsenburg*, of which most English boys will know nothing. Another work that fascinated him beyond measure was Lord Anson's *Voyage Round the World*, of which he speaks most highly as combining the solid worth of truth with the rich fancy of legend. That excellent seaman piloted the young Germans in imagination far and wide, and they followed his movements with their fingers on the globe.

There was at Frankfort a publishing firm, or rather manufactory, of chap-books, which were printed in the most shocking style on cheap, spongy paper. These were exposed for sale on a little table before the door of a book-dealer, and could be had for about twopence apiece. The stories were mostly medieval, and comprised *Eulenspiegel*, *The Four Children of Haimon*, *Fair Melusine*, *The Emperor Octavian*, *Fair Magelone*, and *Fortunatus*, down to *The Wandering Jew*. Any such served their turn, and once tasted, they hankered after these books in preference to any dainty. One advantage of this cheap literature was that if a volume became torn or otherwise damaged, it could be speedily replaced and devoured anew.

Young Goethe came in for his share of childish disorders, such as measles, and once his pleasant reading was interrupted by a serious and disagreeable illness. He had just purchased *Fortunatus* with his purse and wishing-cap, when he was attacked by a

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

feverish ailment, which proved to be a precursor of small-pox. His face and body were plastered with blisters, and for several days he lay blind and in great suffering. He had a miserable time. Finally, the blisters disappeared without leaving a trace on his skin, but his features had undergone a remarkable change, and people were unkind enough to tease him unmercifully about it. He had a very lively aunt, who before had made an idol of him, but thenceforward, even years afterward, could seldom look upon him without exclaiming, 'Oh, the devil, how ugly he has grown!'

Goethe's repeated illnesses were awkward in another way, as his father expected him, when he was barely convalescent, to make up arrears in his studies, and he was saddled with double lessons. His lively aunt had a sister, who was herself peaceful and married to a peaceful husband, a clergyman named Stark. This good man had a fine library, and there, in a prose translation, the boy received his first introduction to Homer. Unfortunately, the work was adorned with copperplates in the French theatrical style, and these pictures had a ruinous effect on his imagination. For a long time he could only think of Homer's heroes as they were depicted in that absurd guise. Editors and publishers are more careful or more sensible now, and illustrated classics make a nearer approach to reality.

When he was about fifteen, Goethe fell into a serious scrape. He had a secret love-affair with a girl named Gretchen, two years older than himself,

Boys who Became Famous

and of an inferior social grade. Her friends, though Goethe knew nothing amiss of them and they were very good-natured to him, seem to have been suspicious characters, and one morning the boy was awakened by his mother and informed that he would have to face a magisterial inquiry in the room below. He was accused of forging documents to oblige his new associates, but the worthy justice stated that the young culprit would be forgiven in consideration of his age and the respectability of his family—only he must make full confession. On his own showing Goethe had nothing to confess beyond his clandestine attachment, but he was excessively worried by the ordeal, and although his sister assured him that the two gentlemen who had called to see him had left the house laughing, he appears to have worked himself into a high fever from an agonized apprehension of what might befall his low acquaintances.

CHAPTER VII: *Hans Christian Andersen*

THE name of Hans Christian Andersen is familiar to young and old, many of whom will have read his fairy tales. To his own people, the Danes, he is known also as a poet and a writer of books of travel. His fairy tales, however, will form a sufficient introduction, and not a few perhaps will be glad to learn something of the early days of the author of that favourite collection.

In the year 1805 there lived at Odensee, the capital of the Danish island of Fühnen, a young shoemaker and his wife. He was twenty-two, and she a few years older, and, as every married couple should be, they were extremely fond of each other. But they were terribly poor. They occupied a small mean room, in which the chief articles of furniture were a shoemaker's bench and a bedstead. The young husband had made them both himself, the bedstead out of a wooden frame, which not long before had supported the coffin of the dead Count Trampe, as he lay in state; and bits of black cloth still clung to the woodwork. On this rough contrivance, with its melancholy associations, there rested, on April 2, 1805, a new-born babe. It was Hans Christian Andersen.

His father was a disappointed man. He had hoped to receive an education at the grammar school, and, as he had a richly gifted mind and a true appreciation of the poetical side of things, he felt the depriva-

Boys who Became Famous

tion keenly all the days of his life. His father—Hans Christian's grandfather—had been a countryman in easy circumstances, but he seems to have been wanting in intelligence, and had fallen so low that his old wife was employed as gardener at a lunatic asylum. She used to tell her grandson about her mother's mother, who, she said, had been a rich and noble lady at Cassel, but had run away and married a handsome actor. For this little romance all her descendants had to pay. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that the boy had a puppet-theatre, and took the greatest delight in making clothes for his dolls—the actors.

Hans Christian was a dreamy child—a tendency inherited, no doubt, from his father, whose musings at last took a military turn. He was a warm admirer of Napoleon, and could not rest until he had joined a corps that was being raised in Fühnen for service under the Emperor. It never got farther than Holstein, and peace having been concluded, the martial cobbler returned to his work-stool, weakened in body and mind. Soon after he died, and his widow went out washing.

Hans Christian was left more than ever to his own devices. By some means he became acquainted with a clergyman's widow, Madame Bunkeflod, a lady with some literary reputation; and he now studied Shakespeare in a translation. He took to writing tragedies, and his recitations gave him the *entrée* into the houses of the great people at Odensee. Among the rest, Colonel Hugh Guldberg was very kind to

Hans Christian Andersen

him and introduced him to Prince Christian, afterward King of Denmark. Not one of his friends, however, seems to have done anything in the way of promoting his education or enabling him to get his own living.

At first he obtained work in a factory, but, alarmed by some rough joke of the workmen, he ran home and never entered the premises again. He was next sent to a charity school, where the teaching was inefficient, and he went on writing plays with hardly a trace of correct spelling in them. He was now a tall boy, with long yellow hair, and his mother proposed to apprentice him to a tailor, preparatory to which he had to be confirmed. He had a dread of boys of his own class, who laughed at him in the streets as a play-writer, so he presented himself to a clergyman who instructed only gentlemen's children. Alas, they would have nothing to do with him, with the exception of one young girl, who smiled on him and gave him a rose.

During the last year of his apprenticeship a party of singers and performers arrived at the Theatre Royal, and Hans Christian not only witnessed a succession of operas and tragedies, but was allowed to take part in them as page, shepherd, etc. This experience convinced him that his destiny was the stage, and, as he had saved about thirty shillings, he begged his mother that he might go to Copenhagen. After consulting a 'wise woman,' who predicted that Odensee would one day be illuminated in his honour, she reluctantly consented.

Hans Christian, now fourteen, set off in a post-carriage with a letter of introduction to Madame

Boys who Became Famous

Schall, the solo dancer, given him by an old printer. He reached the capital on the morning of Monday, September 5, 1819, and on the following day, having dressed himself in his confirmation suit, an old great coat of his father's, and a pair of creaking shoes, hastened to present himself to Madame Schall.

The dancer, who had not the slightest knowledge of the old printer, gazed at the boy in astonishment, and inquired what character he could support. 'Cinderella,' he replied, 'I have seen it performed at Odensee.' So saying, he drew off his boots, and taking up his broad hat for a tambourine, began to dance and sing :

*Here below, nor rank nor riches
Are exempt from pain and woe.*

His strange gestures and extraordinary activity rather frightened the lady, who thought he was out of his mind, and lost no time in getting rid of him. On applying to the manager of the theatre, he was curtly informed that they engaged only people of education, and he was almost at his wit's end where to look for employment when he suddenly remembered the name of Siboni, the Italian director of the Copenhagen Academy of Music. Should he fail in this attempt, he made up his mind to take his passage back to Fühnen. It happened that that evening Siboni had a large dinner-party, and on receiving the boy's message from his housekeeper, he and his guests went out to look at him.



Hans Andersen dances

Hans Christian Andersen

They made him sing, and Siboni listened attentively. He gave some scenes out of Holberg, and repeated a few poems. Then, all at once, the sense of his unhappy condition overcame him, and he burst into tears. The whole company applauded. 'I prophesy,' said the poet Baggesen, 'that one day something will come out of him. But do not be vain,' he added, turning to Hans Christian, 'when some day the entire public shall applaud you.'

Siboni promised to train his voice, and the next day Professor Weyse, who had been one of the party, raised a small subscription for him. He wrote to his mother, acquainting her with his good fortune, and began to learn German that he might understand Siboni's instructions. The latter received him into his house, and for a time the boy's prospects seemed of the brightest. In about six months, however, his voice had lost much of its strength and purity. This was the direct result of his poverty, which obliged him to wear bad shoes in winter, with no warm underclothing. There was no longer any possibility of his becoming a fine singer, and Siboni advised him to go to Odensee and learn a trade.

It was a sad blow, but, in the midst of his sorrow and perplexity, Hans Christian recollected that the poet Guldberg, brother of his old friend the colonel, lived at Copenhagen. He sent a note to him, relating the circumstances, and then called upon him. He found the poet surrounded with books and tobacco-pipes, and after a kindly welcome, Guldberg promised to give him some lessons in the Danish language as

Boys who Became Famous

well as the profits of a small work he had just published. The latter proved to be worth having, amounting to the equivalent of something like twenty guineas. Guldberg, however, was not satisfied that he had done all he could or should for the boy. He induced Lindgrön, the comedian, to instruct him, and arranged for him to receive Latin lessons twice a week. The excellent Weyse, too, remained his constant friend.

From time to time Hans Christian was given a little part in a ballet or at the theatre, but at the end of two years the money collected for him was all spent, and things again assumed a threatening aspect. Happily, his voice had gradually regained its richness, and the singing master offered him a place in the choir school. The boy's mind, however, was set on the drama, and he annoyed his good friend the poet by neglecting his Latin and repairing as often as possible to the theatre, for which he wrote two plays. Of course they were rejected, and at the close of the theatrical season he was dismissed from the schools. Still, the directors were not ill disposed toward him, and expressed a wish that some of his many friends would enable him to receive an education, without which talent availed nothing.

The director of the Theatre Royal at that time was Collin, one of the most distinguished men in Denmark ; and Andersen was told on all hands that the best thing he could do for himself would be to interest that important and influential person in his fortunes. Essentially a man of business, concise and undemonstrative, Collin took up the boy's case. Without

Hans Christian Andersen

flattering the young poet, he laboured quietly but perseveringly for his benefit, and recommended him to the King, Frederick IV, who granted him a small allowance for several years. Through Collin, also, the directors of the high schools gave him a free place in the grammar school at Slagelsee, to which a new rector or head master had just been appointed. Unluckily, that person had little sympathy with Andersen, and delighted in ridiculing him, while Andersen himself was morbidly conscientious. Although he made rapid progress in his studies, he was haunted by the fear that it was not rapid enough, and that he was disappointing his kind friends.

At length, the single holiday of the year came round, and he went to Copenhagen on a visit to Admiral Wülff and his family. They occupied a part of the Castle of Amalienburg, and his room looked out into the square. His hosts were kindness itself, but his stay was not altogether pleasant. At the admiral's house he met many distinguished people—notably, the poet, Adam Oehlenschläger. One evening in the large brilliantly-illuminated drawing-room he was pained by the reflection that his dress was the shabbiest there, and he hid himself behind the long curtains. Oehlenschläger came forward and offered him his hand, and Andersen declares he could have fallen on his knees before him.

Others were less considerate. During his residence at Slagelsee he had written four or five poems ; and at Helsingör, whither he had removed with the rector, he composed *The Dying Child*, destined to be most

Boys who Became Famous

popular of all his poems. At Copenhagen he read it to some acquaintances, some of whom were struck with it. Most of them, however, only remarked on his Fühnen dialect or advised him not to have too good a conceit of himself. On his return to school, the rector, who had heard of his reading one of his poems to a number of people, ordered him to bring it to him, telling him that if he found a ray of genius in it, he would forgive him. *The Dying Child* was produced, and the rector, having read it, pronounced it sickly and idle trash. After that, he was a worse tyrant than ever, and Collin, to whom his barbarity was reported, immediately removed the boy to Copenhagen, where his life was more placid.

At their parting interview, the rector cursed the lad, and said he would never make a student, that his verses would grow mouldy on the floor of the bookseller's shop, and that he would end his days in a madhouse. Several years afterward, when Andersen's writings were being read and the *Improvisatore* had come out, the two met at Copenhagen. The rector held out his hand and confessed his mistake, but by that time it was all the same to the rising author.

CHAPTER VIII: *Humphry Davy*

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY distinguished himself as a chemist, by which we do not mean that he kept a big shop and sold drugs, but that he probed deeply into the combinations and properties of elementary bodies and the laws that govern them. He was a great man of science. Sir Humphry was also a man of varied attainments, and we can hardly err in tracing his broad intellectual sympathies to the fact that he was not attracted too soon to the pursuit that was to occupy his maturer years. He received a good education on the old-fashioned lines ; and in culture and refinement, as well as in originality and aptitude for research, he stands very high amongst those who have dedicated their lives to the study of inanimate nature.

Humphry Davy was born at Penzance, in Cornwall, on December 17, 1778. His ancestors had owned a small estate at Varfell, in Mount's Bay, but his grandfather was a builder. Humphry's father was sent to London and apprenticed to a carver in wood, but, on succeeding to the family property, which sufficed for his modest wants, devoted himself to his art as an amusement. Since the time of Grinling Gibbons the demand for ornamental carving had been on the wane, and the profession was then almost extinct—indeed in the neighbourhood of Penzance Robert Davy was considered the Last of the Carvers, and, being a small man, was commonly called 'The

Boys who Became Famous

Little Carver.' He married a lady named Grace Millett, who, with her two sisters, had been adopted and brought up by Mr John Tonkin, a surgeon and apothecary of the town.

Humphry was still a child when his parents removed from Penzance to reside on their estate at Varfell. He then passed part of his time with them, and the rest with Mr Tonkin, who took a deep interest in him. He was first placed in a preparatory school kept by a Mr Bushell, where he made such rapid progress that the master advised his father to send him to a better school. It is recorded that, when he was about five, he would turn over the leaves of a book as if he were only counting them or hunting after the pictures, but, on being questioned, he could nearly always give a satisfactory account of its contents. This faculty he retained through life, and Lady Davy was often surprised beyond expression to observe how quickly he got through a book, and with what accuracy he remembered it. A living author and journalist—Sir W. Robertson Nicoll—is credited with possessing the same gift, but it must be very rare, and therefore we are tempted to mention an instance showing that, in Sir Humphry's case, it was not a delusion.

Soon after Dr Murray had published his *System of Chemistry*, Davy, accompanied by a Mr Children, went on an excursion to Tunbridge, and the new book was placed in the carriage. In the intervals of conversation Davy was seen turning over the pages of the work, but his friend deemed it impossible that he

Humphry Davy

could master its contents until, at the close of the journey, he astonished him with a critical opinion of the book.

Like Chalmers and Franklin and a host of others, Davy, when a child, revelled in *The Pilgrim's Progress* ; and from that he proceeded to the reading of history—more especially the history of England. At the age of eight, he would collect a number of boys in a circle, and, mounting a cart or carriage that might be standing before the inn near Mr Tonkin's, harangue them on different subjects, on which he gave them the benefit of his ideas.

Davy was a great lover of the marvellous, and amused himself and his schoolfellows by composing stories of romance and tales of chivalry. These he reeled off with the fluency of an Italian improvisatore. Had the age been more promising, he would gladly have sallied forth, armed cap-à-pie, in search of adventures, and with a burning desire to encounter giants and dragons. Davy's early fondness for fiction suggests the discomfiting reflection that his talent may have been diverted into the wrong channel. Probably no county in the United Kingdom is richer in folk-lore than Cornwall ; and, if Humphry Davy had applied his inventive genius to the history, legends, traditions, and superstitions of Lyonesse, he might have left a name as a great romancer.

He was in the habit also of writing poems and ballads ; and on one occasion got up a pantomime. The *dramatis personæ* and the names of the young actors, as originally cast, were discovered years after-

Boys who Became Famous

ward on a fly-leaf torn out of a lexicon. They were as follows :

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| FATHER . . . | <i>Cunnack.</i> |
| HARLEQUIN . . | <i>Davy.</i> |
| CLOWN | <i>(illegible).</i> |
| COLUMBINE . . | <i>Hitchens.</i> |
| CUPID | <i>Veale.</i> |
| FORTUNA . . . | <i>Scobell.</i> |
| BEN | <i>Billy Giddy.</i> |
| NURSE | <i>Robyns.</i> |
| MACCARONI . . | <i>Dennis.</i> |

Davy and his friends used to play a game called Tournament. They fashioned shields and visors of pasteboard and lances of wood, which were made to resemble steel by means of black-lead ; and, thus equipped, the juvenile combatants would tilt at each other and go through a number of military evolutions.

Turning to another of Davy's many sides, he was an adept in making fireworks and possessed the secret of preparing a composition to which he gave the name of ' Thunder-powder.' This he would explode on a stone to the great wonder and delight of his admiring playfellows. Somewhat similarly, he would scoop out the inside of a turnip, and placing a lighted candle in it, make it serve as a lamp, by the aid of which he would melt fragments of tin, such as were easily obtained from the blocks of metal lying about the streets of the mining town. For the privilege of witnessing the performance he demanded from his companions the payment of so many pins.

Humphry Davy

Davy was very fond of fishing ; and, as soon as he was old enough to carry a gun, he used to go out shooting. This recreation enabled him to form a collection of rare birds occasionally seen in the neighbourhood, which he is said to have stuffed with more than ordinary care. He was fond of sketching and would caricature anything that struck his fancy. When at home, he would shut himself up in his room, arrange the chairs, and lecture to them by the hour together. The wicked thought occurs to us—what a pity some one was not by to caricature him !

Here it should be remarked that he was placed quite early at the Penzance Grammar School, of which the Rev. J. C. Coryton was the headmaster. He lived with Mr Tonkin except in the holidays, which were always spent with his parents at Varfell. About the year 1793 he went from Penzance school to Truro, and finished his education under the Rev. Dr Cardew, a very successful teacher. Davy had so many interests that it is hardly a matter for surprise that Dr Cardew found him very backward. The good doctor, however, saw that he would make an apt pupil, and, instead of assigning him to a lower form, placed him with boys of his own age, telling him that he must work hard and justify his master's opinion of his ability.

In after years Dr Cardew was not a little perplexed at Davy's scientific achievements. He confessed that he had failed to detect any sign of such faculties in his pupil, though he had noticed his taste for poetry, and encouraged it. Speaking generally, he said that his human material was so good that he had only

Boys who Became Famous

(quoting Horace) to perform the part of a whetstone, whilst he himself did no cutting. Interpreting this last phrase as a sly allusion to the cane, one writer has doubted whether Cardew's old scholars would have confirmed the statement, and how far the doctor would have been able to descend into the shadowy regions of Maro without 'the gift of the fatal rod.' One thing seems pretty certain, which is that Davy's previous master, Mr Coryton, had no scruples about the infliction of corporal punishment, and Davy received his share. Unfortunately, his name lent itself to doggerel verse, and his severe master concocted the following rhyme :

*Now, Master Davy,
Now, sir, I'll have 'e ;
No man shall save 'e
Good Master Davy.*

Suiting the action to the rhythm, Coryton used to ply his flat ruler on the hand of the luckless scholar.

In 1794 Davy's father died, and in the following year his mother returned to Penzance and set up in business as a milliner. By the advice of Mr Tonkin, her son was apprenticed to a surgeon named Borlase. He now for the first time turned his attention to chemistry, which he studied with the utmost eagerness, and his eldest sister, who acted as his assistant, well remembered the ravages committed on her dress by corrosive substances. It is to be feared that he bestowed small thought on Mr Borlase's patients. Instead of preparing medicines in the surgery, he was



Davy—and an Explosion

Humphry Davy

experimenting in Mr Tonkin's garret, which he had converted into a laboratory; and more than once he is said to have produced an explosion that put the doctor and all his glass bottles in jeopardy. 'This boy Humphry is incorrigible!' the poor man would exclaim. 'Was there ever so idle a dog? He will blow us all into the air!' And then changing his note, he would speak of him admiringly as 'the philosopher' or call him 'Sir Humphry,' as if he had some inkling of his future renown and the honour that was to be one day conferred upon him. When Davy died, at the age of fifty-one, the great Cuvier declared that he 'occupied, in the opinion of all who could judge of such labours, the first rank among the chemists of this or any other age.' Only two years before Sir Humphry had published his interesting *Salmonia; or Days of Fly-Fishing*, which shows that he had not shrivelled into a scientific recluse, but had retained the healthy passion for out-door sport that had caused him, when a boy, to angle in the very gutters.

CHAPTER IX:

Thomas Chalmers

FAME is acquired in various ways. This time we have to do with a Scottish divine—Thomas Chalmers. Some of the present generation may not have heard of him, but he belongs to history just the same, and Professor Herford sums up his claims to distinction in the following terms: "Chalmers was an orator of undoubted genius, an administrator of great talent, an accomplished scientist, and a second-rate thinker." We may regret that Chalmers' power of thought was only 'second-rate,' which is as much as to say that he was not a philosopher of the highest eminence, but obviously he had great gifts, and neither Dr Herford nor anyone else would have troubled themselves with his limitations if he had not been famous.

The boyhood of Thomas Chalmers is full of interest. He was born at Anstruther, in Fifeshire, on March 17, 1780, and his father was a dyer, shipowner, and general merchant. He had many brothers and sisters, and was himself the sixth child and fourth son of his parents. When two years old he was committed to the care of a cruel and deceitful nurse, and the image of that odious creature haunted his memory to his latest years. He used to tell in indignant tones how inhumanly she behaved to him. When he could stand it no more, and was about to run off and complain of her, she stopped him and poured over him 'a flood of affected tenderness.'

Thomas Chalmers

Thereupon she drew from him a promise not to tell, and treated him worse than ever. The promise was faithfully kept, but, of course, the boy's sense of injustice was deepened by the trick that had been played on him.

To escape from this woman's clutches the little victim was glad to attend school, whither he went of his own accord at the age of three. There matters were not much better. The parish schoolmaster, whose name was Bryce, passed as a fair Latin scholar, and at one time perhaps he had been not a bad teacher. That time had gone by. When Chalmers entered the school, the master's sight was beginning to fail, and after a while he became quite blind. His thirst for flogging, however, remained unimpaired, and indeed may be said to have grown with the loss of his vision.

Like a sleuth-hound, the sightless tyrant used to steal along behind a row of unsuspecting children, listening for some word or movement that suggested a punishable offence, and prepared, as soon as he had fixed on the exact quarter, to deliver a mighty stroke. These tactics, however, were seldom of any avail, as the boys took precautions. One of them in the row opposite to that behind which the master was furtively stalking, was set to watch, and when he paused or raised his arm, thus betraying his intention, a sign was quickly given which enabled the criminal to slip noiselessly out of his place, and to the discomfiture of the enraged Mr Bryce and the vast amusement of the scholars, the blow, instead of falling

Boys who Became Famous

on the person of the wrong-doer, alighted on the desk !

For many years Mr Bryce continued to preside over the school, but he deemed it advisable to engage an assistant, whose work lay with the younger children. Mr Daniel Ramsay was as easy as his employer was harsh, but, as a teacher, he was equally inefficient. He was afterward appointed master of a school at Corstorphine, and, in the hope of bettering his position, wrote a pamphlet on mixed schools. Unfortunately, he was guilty of some act of imprudence, which cost him his post, and he sank into poverty. He ended his days in Gillespie's Hospital, and told the minister, who visited him on his death-bed, how much he was indebted to his old pupil. 'Many a pound note,' said he, 'has the Doctor given me, and he always did the thing as if he were afraid that some one should see him. May God reward him !'

Ramsay was a most eccentric man. On one occasion he wrote to the Duke of Wellington, saying that he could give him a recipe for curing the ills of Ireland, which was to 'take the taws¹ in the tae hand and the Testament in the tither.' The Duke was burdened with the affairs of state, but he sent an acknowledgment, signed by his own hand, which made Ramsay very proud. It is difficult to state of which fact he was more proud—having taught Dr Chalmers or acted as adviser to the Duke of Wellington in the government of Ireland.

¹ Tawse : "A thick leather strap, slit at the end into fingers, once common in Scotland for chastising school-boys."—NUTTALL.

Thomas Chalmers

As for Chalmers, he was one of the idlest, strongest, liveliest and most generous-hearted boys in Anstruther school. If he was in the mood, he could prepare his lessons without giving much time or attention to them, and then it would be found that not one of his schoolfellows mastered them so quickly or so well. But when the time came for saying them, it often proved that he had hardly half learned his lessons, or that he had not learned them at all. In such circumstances the punishment was to banish the culprit to the coal-hole, where he had to remain until he was ready with his task. Many of the boys were less frequently in the place of punishment than Thomas Chalmers, but once there, few of them got out of it as speedily as he did.

Chalmers shared in all the games of the school, and was first and foremost in every lawful expedition, but mischief was not in his nature. Although stronger than most of his companions, he was no bully, but stood as the protector of the weak and oppressed. Being thoroughly amiable and good-tempered, he was impatient of rough-play and angry scenes. When the passions of his schoolfellows were aroused and a storm of mussel-shells, hurled by contending factions, rent the air, Thomas Chalmers beat a retreat, and entering a neighbouring house, exclaimed, 'I'm no for powder and ball.' This saying was remembered by the good woman by whose ingle he took refuge, and in after years when Chalmers was thought to be rather combative, she would quote it triumphantly as a sure proof of his peaceable disposition. Lying

Boys who Became Famous

and swearing were at all times entirely foreign to him.

The boy's father was decidedly religious, and no doubt he often saw and heard ministers. When Thomas was quite a small boy, he made up his mind to become a minister himself, and a sister of one of his school-fellows, breaking into a room to which he and his brother had retired, was astonished to find him mounted on a chair and discoursing in the most energetic manner to his solitary hearer from the text, 'Let brotherly love continue!'

We are not sure, however, that an earlier performance of the future divine is not still more remarkable. One evening, when he was a mere infant of three and, of course, unable to read, he was suddenly missed. As it had grown dark, some alarm was felt, but before long he was found alone in the nursery. There he was pacing up and down completely absorbed and repeating to himself with great earnestness the words of David 'O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!'

From these instances it may be inferred that Thomas Chalmers was, from his mother's arms, a little saint. In point of fact, he does not seem to have given entire satisfaction to his relatives as to his spiritual condition. He was fond of reading the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gaudentia di Lucca*, and deeply interested in pictures of Scripture scenes, but it was feared that the Bible only affected him by its literary beauty.

Thomas Chalmers was not yet twelve years of age

Thomas Chalmers

when he accompanied his elder brother William to the United College of St Andrews, and was enrolled as a student. Here he made the acquaintance of a boy called Miller, who, like himself, afterward became a minister. At his entrance into the university Chalmers is described as very young, volatile, and boyish—and idle. Miller appears to have been much the same, and during their first two sessions the two spent most of their time in pleasant amusements, such as golf, football, and handball—especially the last, in which Chalmers excelled, owing to his being left-handed.

It was a mistake to send the boys to college so early and without proper preparation, but, after those two joyous sessions of mental indolence, they settled down to the study of mathematics, and Chalmers became so fascinated with it that he studied French in order to profit by works in that language on the higher branches of his favourite science. After the age of sixteen he was expected to devote his attention to theology, but, generally speaking, divinity was far from his thoughts, which continued to be fixed on the magic symbols of universal arithmetic. What ideas he had on the subject were sadly unorthodox and more like poetry than pure gospel. But there is very little—in fact, *no* poetry in his journal of a visit to his brother James at Liverpool in the year 1796. His father, as we have seen, was a merchant, and on reading this fragment, we might well imagine that Thomas was a merchant too. Ignoring such topics as scenery, he records every change of

Boys who Became Famous

the wind in the Firth of Forth from Anstruther to Grangemouth, the exact number of locks in the Forth and Clyde Canal, how many ascended from one river, and how many from the other ; also, the exact number of steps in the stairs of Dumbarton Castle, the rates of increase over a long series of years in the population, shipping, and dock-dues of Liverpool, the relative extent of ploughed land and pasture land in Cheshire, and so on. Professor Herford praises Chalmers as an administrator of great talent. In this matter-of-fact, business-like diary we may trace the beginnings of it.

As a schoolboy and freshman Chalmers had been idle, and therefore we are not prepared to place on his masters the whole of the blame for his shortcomings in the rudiments of learning. Otherwise we might fairly have thought that, whatever accomplishments he neglected or they failed to impart, he would at any rate have been taught to spell. But after two years at college he wrote letters containing the most appalling blunders. However, he cured himself of this defect and acquired a most fluent style of composition.

On quitting St Andrews in 1798, Chalmers obtained a situation as a private tutor. There were thirteen brothers and sisters now—not all at home—so he had to do something. His departure from Anstruther was marked by a comical incident. He was to travel to the ferry at Dundee on horseback, and after taking an affectionate leave of the assembled family, he mounted his steed in such a manner that, when on its back, he

Thomas Chalmers

found himself with his head turned to the horse's tail. There were peals of laughter, in which he was obliged to join, and, wheeling round as quickly as he could, he rode off with the sounds of merriment still echoing in his ears.

CHAPTER X: *Napoleon* *Buonaparte*

BUONAPARTE? Yes. There are two ways of spelling the name, but whichever may be preferred as applied to the time of his generalship, we think there can be no doubt that the Italian form is more appropriate to the Emperor's boyhood. He was born at Ajaccio, in Corsica, and was a few months younger than his conqueror at Waterloo, whose birthday was May 1; Napoleon's was on August 15, 1769. The next day was the festival of Saint Napoleon, and he was christened after the man of God.

Napoleon's father, Carolo Buonaparte, was by no means enamoured of the recent change whereby his country passed under the French lilies, and he fought by the side of the brave patriot, Paoli, for Corsica's freedom. When the struggle proved useless, Paoli sought refuge in England, and his comrade was inclined to adopt the same course. But he altered his mind, and died in his native island at the age of thirty-eight. He had made his peace with the victors and contracted a warm friendship with the French governor, Marbœuf, by whose influence he had been appointed Assessor to the Supreme Court at Ajaccio.

In early life Napoleon himself rankled under the oppression of the French. As a young artillery officer, he wrote to Paoli from Auxomme, in Burgundy: 'General, I was born when our country was perishing. Thirty thousand Frenchmen vomited on our

Napoleon Buonaparte

coasts, drowning the throne of liberty in streams of blood—such was the odious spectacle which first presented itself to my sight. The cries of the dying, the groans of the oppressed, the tears of despair—such were the companions of my infancy. . . . I at one time indulged the hope that I might be able to go to London, to express my feelings to you and talk of the misfortunes of my country. But the distance is an obstacle. The day will perhaps arrive when I shall be able to overcome it.’

Paoli, there is no question, was the idol of Napoleon’s youth. Once, when he was at Brienne and some one spoke disparagingly of the patriot, Napoleon passionately resented the insult. ‘Paoli,’ he exclaimed, ‘was a great man. He loved his country, and never will I forgive my father, who had been his adjutant, for having concurred in the union of Corsica with France. He should have followed Paoli’s fortune and fallen with him.’ On another occasion, some of the pupils twitted him with his foreign complexion and accent. He turned to Bourienne in a rage, and said with grim emphasis, ‘Ah, I will do your Frenchmen all the harm it shall ever be in my power to inflict.’

But we must not anticipate. Napoleon’s picture of his childhood is not engaging, and we are led to think of him as a little monster. ‘In my infancy,’ he says, ‘I was noisy and quarrelsome, and feared nobody. I beat one, scratched another, and made myself formidable to all.’ Among those who were beaten, pinched and tormented by the future master of Europe was his elder brother, Joseph, who, unfortun-

Boys who Became Famous

ately for both of them, was of a mild and unassuming character. It was remarked that Napoleon never shed tears when he was punished ; and he had also a high sense of honour. When he was seven years of age, he was wrongfully suspected of some misdeed, but rather than betray a companion—the actual culprit—he bore the pain and disgrace of a flogging and lived for three days on the coarsest food. Singularly enough, he struck no one as being clever, and his mother declared that of all her many children—there were thirteen of them, living and dead—Napoleon seemed least likely to distinguish himself. Curiously enough, Wellington's mother had formed the same estimate of her son when a boy. There was just one circumstance, however, which, in the light of subsequent events, appears prophetic of Napoleon's destiny. He had for a plaything the model of a cannon, weighing about thirty pounds, which was long preserved at his birthplace, and, for aught we know, may be still there.

Besides his town house at Ajaccio, Napoleon's father had a country villa, which was used by the family as a summer residence, and had formerly belonged to a relative, Cardinal Fesch. In the grounds was an isolated granite rock, at the base of which, almost concealed by wild olive, cactus and almond trees, was an aperture since known as Napoleon's Grotto. Here at holiday times he used to shut himself up with his cannon, and meditate—some think, on the woes of his country, and others, on the mighty acts he would do when he was older.

Napoleon Buonaparte

The boy Napoleon might rail against the French as despoilers of his native land, but personally he owed much to them, and especially to one member of that nation, whose name we have already mentioned, Monsieur de Marbœuf. This gentleman was impressed with young Buonaparte's military ardour, and, thanks to the good offices of the worthy count, he was sent at the age of nine years and some months to an academy for cadets. This was the Royal Military School at Brienne, where he remained for five years and a half. Before this he was for a short time at a similar institution at Angers—strange to say, the very seminary in which the Duke of Wellington learnt the first rudiments of the art of war.

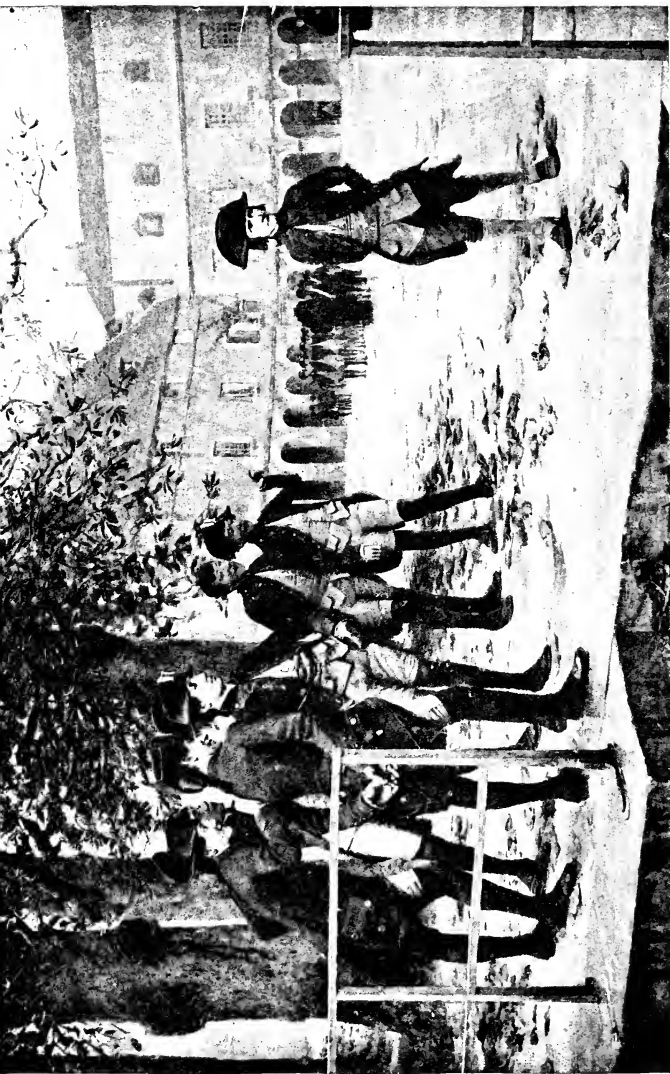
Wellington said that the battle of Waterloo was won in the playing-fields at Eton, but, when he was at school, he was remarked as a quiet, studious boy. At Brienne, the young Napoleon was equally reserved. He had few friends, and no intimates. He did not shirk his lessons, though, like most schoolboys, he did better in some than in others. On this subject the report of an inspector, M. de Keraloo, dated October 1784, makes excellent reading:

“M. de Bonaparte, born August 15, 1769, height 4 feet 10 inches, finished his fourth course. Of good constitution, excellent health, of submissive character, and regular conduct, he has always been distinguished for application to mathematics. He is tolerably well acquainted with history and geography. He is deficient in the ornamental branches, and in Latin. Will make an excellent sailor.”

Boys who Became Famous

By 'ornamental branches' is probably meant literature—the inspector can hardly have intended spelling. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Napoleon found grave obstacles in the spelling and grammar of the French language. It is really astonishing what a stumbling-block spelling has proved to boys of exceptional ability. Our own short list affords at least three instances—Chalmers, Andersen, and now Napoleon. There was another obstacle that he had failed to overcome—his temper. On one occasion he was sentenced by his master to a degrading punishment, which was to dine at the gate of the refectory on his knees. The boy's suppressed rage made him tremble from head to foot and brought on a violent fit of vomiting.

Meanwhile Napoleon's aptitude for the profession of arms became increasingly evident. During the winter of 1783-4 there was a heavy snowfall, and the ordinary outdoor games had to be suspended. To pass the time Napoleon suggested to his comrades that they should form entrenchments and bastions of snow with parapets, ravelins, and hornworks. Two parties were enlisted—one for the attack and the other for the defence of the works; Napoleon being in command of the assailants. This mimic warfare continued for several weeks, during which the combatants on both sides received honourable wounds. Beginning with snow-balls, they could not restrain their ardour and betook themselves to gravel and stones. The sport was getting too dangerous, and accordingly the authorities interposed and put a stop to it.



Napoleon at Brienne
By Réalier Dumas
Photo Neurdein

Napoleon Buonaparte

At another time the boys heard a rumour that they were not to be allowed to attend the annual fair held in the neighbourhood of Brienne. By way of precaution Napoleon advised that the garden wall should be secretly undermined. This was done so effectually that on fair-day, when the monks and masters were lecturing the impatient scholars on the evils of frequenting such disorderly scenes, a mass of the masonry fell in, leaving a huge gap through which the boys chased each other like a flock of sheep before their mentors had time to realize what had happened.

One more anecdote of Napoleon's school-days. The boys were to perform a play called *The Death of Cæsar*, and the wife of the porter, who was in the habit of selling fruit and therefore well known to the pupils, presented herself at the door of their theatre and asked permission to enter. This was refused, but the woman persisted, and she began to create a disturbance. The serjeant in charge of the vestibule reported the matter to young Napoleon—the officer in command. Whereupon the future Emperor replied in solemn tones, 'Remove that woman, who brings here the licence of camps!'

In October 1784 Napoleon left Brienne for the central military school at Paris. His old masters were probably not sorry, while his new teachers were certainly not too well pleased with their acquisition. The sub-principal described him as a 'domineering, imperious, headstrong boy'—partly because he took upon himself to be perpetually finding fault with the

Boys who Became Famous

lax discipline and extravagance connived at in the school. It is with no small wonderment that one reads the grave protest addressed to head-quarters by the meagre, insignificant youth of fifteen. 'Since,' he writes, 'the King's pupils are all of them poor gentlemen destined for the military profession, should they not be really, essentially educated to that end? Accustomed to a sober life, to be rigidly scrupulous in conduct and appearance, they would become robust, would be able to support the inclemency of seasons, the fatigues of war, and inspire respect and a blind devotion in the soldiers placed under their command.'

Coming from a mere boy, the authorities could not be expected to relish such candid censure, and they seem to have made up their minds to get rid of him at the earliest opportunity. So they accelerated his examination, which was pronounced very satisfactory, and in September 1785, he received his commission as second-lieutenant in the artillery regiment of La Fère, posted at Valence. In the following year he competed for the prize offered by the Academy of Lyons for the best essay on the question, by what principles and institutions mankind can be raised to the highest pitch of happiness !

CHAPTER XI:

Charles Lamb

WE do not know whether there is any excuse for calling Charles Lamb an average boy. If we do, we may perhaps be told that average boys do not become famous—that, however unapparent, genius is inborn, and so present from the first, and all the time. Daunted by this argument, we will amend our proposition. For seven years, then, Lamb contrived to live the life of the average boy, and for our part we do not regret it. It is with something like relief that we turn for a moment from the vagaries or wonderful achievements of prodigies to the gentleness and modesty of one who could march abreast with his fellows, and, when he became Elia, discoursed in his own charming vein on matters of every day. Wordsworth boasted that he did not much delight in ‘personal talk.’ Charles Lamb raised gossip to a fine art.

What attracts us most of all in the essayist is his rich sociability, and we put it down to the fact that, instead of being reared egotistically at home, he was sent right early to Christ’s Hospital. Still, like other boys, he had a father and mother, and their names and occupations must be duly entered. Charles’s father, John Lamb, was clerk to Mr Samuel Salt, a bencher of the Inner Temple, and his mother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Field, was the daughter of a housekeeper at Gilston in Hertfordshire. He had a brother, John, and a sister, Mary, the former

Boys who Became Famous

twelve, and the latter ten years older than himself. Concerning all these persons Lamb has much to say in his writings, but he gives them fictitious names and studiously masks the nearness of the relationships. His father is the Lovel of *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*; you may—and should—read about his grandmother in *Mrs Battle's Opinions on Whist*. As for his brother and sister, they appear as 'cousins' in *My Relations* and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*. There is more about John, and something about Charles's first-love, Alice Winn, in the article "Dream Children." From these various sources may be derived a picture of family associations hardly to be surpassed in humour, tenderness, and affection, and rendered all the more touching by their tragic sequel. With that we are not here concerned. We have chosen to treat Charles Lamb as a typical schoolboy, and to our prefatory remarks shall add but one more—he was born in Crown Office Row, London, on February 18, 1775.

His father having obtained a presentation for him, Charles entered Christ's Hospital on October 9, 1782, and a bluecoat boy he remained till November 23, 1789. Lamb's governor—that is, the person who presented him to the foundation—seems to have been none other than Mr Samuel Salt, who lived 'in a manner' under his father's roof; and this circumstance was a great advantage to him. It shielded him from severity on the part of the masters, and prevented his being ill-used by those young bullies, the monitors, for any complaint his governor might

Charles Lamb

make was sure to receive attention. Charles, therefore, enjoyed privileges denied to most of his school-fellows. His friends resided not far away, and he was able to go to see them practically when he liked.

To that extent he may be described as a favoured child of fortune, and it is not to be wondered at that after a lapse of many years he cherished the most pleasant memories of this period of his existence. "For me," he wrote, "I do not know whether a constitutional imbecility does not incline me too obstinately to cling to the remembrances of childhood; in an inverted ratio to the usual sentiments of the rest of mankind, nothing that I have been engaged in since seems of any value or importance, compared to the colours which imagination gave to everything then. I belong to no body corporate such as I then made a part of."

Precisely! Therein lies the difference between Lamb and the majority of our heroes. Where they panted for freedom and the achievement of personal ends, he was content with rule, order, tradition, and temperate enjoyment. His ideal of life was a game of cricket—not the survival of the fittest. But we need not repeat what has been said before. Suffice it to point out that the 'body corporate' referred to is Christ's Hospital; the phrase occurs in one of Lamb's essays particularly devoted to the celebrated school. He wrote two such little histories, the first entitled *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, and the second *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*. The latter has been termed a continuation of the former,

Boys who Became Famous

as in a way it is, but in one of them he describes the school from his own point of view, and in the other from that of a friendless boy supposed to have hailed from Wiltshire. We feel sure Lamb must have had in his eye some real prototype—he may have had more than one, as there were plenty of boys at the school who, when grown up, would have concurred with the plain and downright criticism rather than the glowing eulogy. Both essays are equally true, equally sincere ; the discrepancy arises, as we have said, from the point of view.

Not that the *Recollections* convey a wholly favourable impression of Christ's Hospital. If the Grecians—young gentlemen about to wing their flight to the universities—are applauded, almost worshipped, it is not denied that the common monitors, or heads of wards, were inclined to ride roughshod over their charges and too often needed to be called to order by the aforesaid Grecians. The sharpest censure, however, is reserved for the ' King's boys,' or mathematical scholars, who, thanks to the munificence of his Majesty King Charles the Second, were being trained for the navy or mercantile marine. These boys had their virtues ; they maintained the honour of the school against the apprentices and butchers' boys of the neighbourhood, and bore with fortitude their master's frequent and terrible lashings. But this rough discipline made them brutal ; and no words can portray the trepidation of the small boys when the cry resounded through the cloisters ' The First Order is coming ! '

Charles Lamb

But, on the whole, Lamb's *Recollections* of the school were agreeable—at any rate, he prefers to dwell on its pleasanter aspects, which include—

“ Our transcending superiority in those invigorating sports, leap-frog and basting the bear ; our delightful excursions in the summer holidays to the New River, near Newington, where, like otters, we could live the long day in the water, never caring for dressing ourselves when we had once stripped ; our savoury meals afterwards, when we came home almost famished with staying out all day without our dinners ; our visits at other times to the Tower, where, by ancient privilege, we had free access to all the curiosities ; our solemn processions through the City at Easter, with the Lord Mayor's largess of buns, wine, and a shilling, with the festive questions and civic pleasantries of the dispensing Aldermen, which were more to us than all the rest of the banquet,” etc. etc.

We must not omit one intimate touch in which he deserts the usual ‘ we ’ for the first person singular. It relates to Christmastide, when, he tells us, as a young boy, he often lay awake from seven o'clock—bed-time—till ten listening to a carol rudely chanted by the older boys and monitors, which carried him away in imagination to the fields of Bethlehem, and the angels' voices, and the awed shepherds.

And now let us turn to the other picture, or, as Lamb expresses it, ‘ the other side of the argument ’ expounded in *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*. Lamb, who enjoyed his tea and hot rolls in the morning, while other boys had to be satisfied

Boys who Became Famous

with a quarter of a penny loaf and a ' piggin ' of small beer, seems to have been accurately informed of the disgraceful practices that made Christ's Hospital appear another place to the youthful victims. The enormities of the monitors, barely hinted at in the *Recollections*, now come out in bold relief. We read of a dozen poor little mortals being haled from their beds on bitterly cold winter nights—not occasionally either, but night after night—to be chastised with a leathern thong because talking had been heard in the dormitory. They had not uttered a syllable themselves—they were too afraid—and, of course, they could not prevent others from chattering, but they were thrashed all the same.

There was one particularly big brute who actually branded a boy with a red hot iron for having offended him. This young Turk—the story is almost incredible—managed to smuggle in a donkey, which he kept on the leads of the ' wards ' or dormitory. In order to supply the animal with provender, forty of the boys were compelled to part with half their allowance of bread, and were nearly starved. This went on for a week, when, in an unlucky moment, the donkey began to bray. Its presence was thus revealed, and it was packed off to Smithfield, but, so far as Lamb knew, no punishment was meted out to the transgressor.

But it was not only the monitors that rendered life hateful to the less fortunate scholars. In cases of discipline the masters were by no means squeamish, and for one breach they imposed vindictive tortures, which in some instances resulted in lunacy or

Charles Lamb

attempted suicide. Lamb was scarcely seven—a raw novice in the school—when he was appalled by the spectacle of a boy in chains. He was told that this boy had run away. If he committed the offence a second time, a still more severe punishment awaited him. Soon after little Lamb was taken to see the dungeons—square cells where a boy could just lie at full length. At this period the beds consisted of loose straw with a blanket, for which it was believed mattresses were afterwards substituted; and light—what light there was—came in slantwise through an aperture high up in the wall.

In one of these awful places the double-dyed runaway was kept a close prisoner, not being allowed out a single moment of the day and seeing nobody but the porter, who brought him his bread and water and was forbidden to speak to him, and the beadle, who arrived twice a week to summon him to his stated chastisement. Generally speaking, the boy was glad of the change! If solitude was painful by day, it was tenfold worse by night, especially for nervous boys, who, plunged in this abyss of darkness, imagined all sorts of horrors, and were convulsed with alarm when an unwonted sound broke the uncanny stillness. If the culprit made a third attempt to escape, he was expelled with every circumstance of ignominy.

Charles Lamb became the most lovable of men, and he was also, we make no doubt, the most lovable of boys. He took the keenest interest in his fellows both in the days when they were together and in the

Boys who Became Famous

long years that followed their separation. Of course, he bore no love to the members of the egregious 'First Order,' nor yet to such monsters as the graceless brander and donkey-owner, who, he had reason to think, met with an appropriate end on the gallows at St Kitts, brought thither by Lamb's worthy friend, another old blue-coat, Tobin. But the brothers Le Grice, F. W. Franklin, Marmaduke Thompson, and, above all, S. T. Coleridge had nothing in common with the 'petty Nero.' They were of Lamb's chosen circle, and vastly must he have appreciated them, their 'wit-combats,' and their 'waggeries,' to have written of them as he did after an interval of thirty-five years, when, he felt, they ought all to have been still alive and the friends of Elia. Alas, two of them were no more. One had been slain by the climate of the West Indies; and the other had perished nobly on the plains of Salamanca. Gone too was the handsome Allen—the Apollo of their Olympus—who once pinched a London maid and received a blessing instead of a half-uttered curse, when she turned and beheld his striking face.

CHAPTER XII: *George Cruickshank*

THESE are days when the rising generation takes kindly to soldiering. In lieu of the old system of perfunctory drilling, there have sprung up various organizations—officers' training corps, companies of boy-scouts, and lads' brigades—all of them instilling a sense of discipline, chivalry, and patriotic duty to which the old cry against 'militarism,' still repeated in some quarters, will appear strange and unintelligible. These organizations exist for a double purpose—partly for the moral and physical improvement of their members and partly to provide the country with a host of gallant defenders in the hour of need. In the few pages that follow we propose to transport our readers to a time when England was seriously menaced with invasion—to the early years of the greatest of caricaturists, who was also among the first of 'boy-scouts,' although that term was not then in use and the crude efforts of the youthful volunteers did not receive much encouragement from their seniors. When he was an old man, Cruickshank told a friend more than once how sorry he felt that he had not entered the army, so that this sentiment was no mere passing phase or childish illusion.

The Cruickshank family was of Scottish origin, but George was a Londoner through and through. He was born in Duke Street, Bloomsbury, on September 27, 1792, his father, Isaac Cruickshank, being a

Boys who Became Famous

water-colour painter and etcher, who, like his more celebrated son, had a gift for caricature. Unfortunately, he had a weakness for the bottle and spent many a convivial evening at the 'Ben Jonson' tavern in Shoe Lane. George's mother, on the other hand, was a religious woman; and laying her hand on the Bible, would declare that she knew Jerusalem as well as Camden Town. George had an elder brother, Isaac Robert, who shared his tastes alike for soldiering and art; and their early drawings were so much alike that sixty years later the younger brother found it difficult to distinguish between them. As a boy, Robert went to sea and was lost on a desert island. No one ever expected to see him again, but he returned home in a whaler, and George went frantic with delight when he presented himself at their house in Dorset Street, Salisbury Square.

Mrs Cruickshank used to assist her husband by colouring his plates, and at a very early age her two sons were made to help also. George, however, had a fancy for etching, and his father allowed him to 'play' on some of his copper plates, where he put in little bits of shadows or little figures in the background, his father executing the hands and faces. By and by he became more independent, and his first pencilling is dated 1799, when he was in the seventh year. The boy-artist was employed by a publisher named Wallis to illustrate children's books, and he turned out a goodly number of valentines and Twelfth Night characters. In later days he lamented that many of these productions could never be seen

George Cruickshank

or known. They had been destroyed long, long before by the little people who had been given them to play with. One of his 'lines' was the designing of half-penny lottery tickets, and another the embellishment of songs. He likewise sketched public events; and in 1805 he made a drawing of Nelson's funeral car.

This may suffice as an account of George Cruickshank's first efforts as an artist. Without troubling ourselves about his theatrical aspirations, we will address ourselves to the other pursuit that aroused his ardour and enthusiasm—his passion for soldiering. At this distance of time, when England has enjoyed so many years of profound peace—at any rate, as regards the dread of impending invasion—it is not easy to imagine what the country was like at the commencement of the last century. Cruickshank compares it to the state of a beehive, the inmates of which have been disturbed by accident or an intruder. As Dibdin has it,

Buzz was the word of the island.

Every town resembled a garrison, and the inhabitants' ears were incessantly assailed by martial sounds—the tattoo of the drum and the strains of national airs practised on the fife. At five o'clock every morning a bugler perambulated the streets and summoned the volunteers to a two hours' drill. It was the same again in the evening. What with the rattle of musketry and the roar of artillery, war's alarms appeared very real and near at hand. In

Boys who Became Famous

London the Park and Tower guns were fired from time to time in celebration of some victory.

As for the volunteers, they were taught by the regulars to load and fire, and when the respective regiments were fairly proficient, they were inspected by general officers. If those officers were satisfied, a day was appointed for a grand review. George Cruickshank was only a little boy, but he had frequent opportunities of seeing the regulars exercise, and knowing the correct movements, was vastly amused at the blunders of the awkward squads. The same knowledge enabled him to appreciate military precision where it was to be found. Thus it was with mingled pride and pleasure that he watched 'The Loyal St Giles's and St George's Bloomsbury Volunteers'—his father's regiment—wheel out of the old gate of Montague House on their way to be reviewed in Hyde Park. There they acquitted themselves in so soldierly a fashion as to receive warm commendation from their judges, the King's officers.

The volunteers of that period came in for a large share of ridicule and caricature. If Cruickshank may be believed, much of this satire was undeserved. It will be remembered that Napoleon scoffed at the British as 'a nation of shopkeepers.' This saying was told to George III. Not long after, his Majesty reviewed the Metropolitan Volunteers in Hyde Park, and was highly gratified when one fine sturdy body of infantry after another marched past, followed by splendid regiments of cavalry—the City of Westminster Light Horse, commanded by the Prince of

George Cruickshank

Wales ; the City Light Horse, and other corps. Turning to the general officers around him, he exclaimed, ' Shopkeepers ! Shopkeepers ! Shopkeepers ! '

George Cruickshank's father was not the only member of the family to enlist as a volunteer. At a later date his brother Robert served in the rifle company of the ' Loyal North Britons,' rising to the rank of serjeant ; and at a still later period, George himself carried a rifle in the same company. Although he could not refrain from a little jesting on the subject, Cruickshank firmly believed in the advantages he had derived from military training. ' I had acquired,' he says, ' as a child almost all the discipline necessary for an infantry soldier, completing when a youth this part of my military education by serving as a volunteer. This early acquaintance with soldiering led me to study the sword exercise ; and understanding the small sword, and the broadsword as well, and the use of fire-arms, I consider myself able (with a properly trained horse) to mount at a moment's notice and act as an irregular cavalry man.' He also laid claim to some qualifications as an artilleryman and ' horse marine,' but we do not think he was quite serious about these.

It was not only the men who in 1803 formed themselves into regiments of volunteers. The boys copied them, and one of these juvenile regiments was raised by Robert Cruickshank—three years older than George—who appointed himself colonel. It does not appear what rank Master George held—it may have been no higher than a private—but it is hardly

Boys who Became Famous

necessary to state that he joined the regiment. The boys had their drum and fife, also their colours, presented by their mothers and sisters, who helped with their accoutrements. They succeeded, too, in obtaining small 'gun-stocks,' the 'barrels' of their weapons consisting of mop-sticks, kindly polished by 'Betty' with black-lead so as to give them the appearance of real barrels.

'As the old cock crows, the young one learns.' The boys looked on at their fathers' drill, and were ready for inspection quite as soon as their elders. Where Russell and Tavistock Squares now stand were then fields, and it was there that the boys held their field-day, marching in good order from Bloomsbury Church. By 'playing at soldiers,' George Cruickshank acquired some valuable accomplishments. He learnt the manual exercise with the mop-stick gun; he learnt to march, counter-march, mark time, wheel, face, etc., etc., with the result that when he joined a rifle company, he needed no drilling. All that he required to have explained to him was the 'calls' of the bugle and the whistle, which were used instead of the word of command in skirmishing. Having learned to prime, load, fire, and hit a mark, within a week of his entering he was a very fair rifleman.

The moral is evident, but it is tempting to state the conclusion in Cruickshank's own words:

"We all know that early pleasurable impressions, as well as very disagreeable ones, are never effaced; and as 'playing at soldiers' does strongly engage

George Cruickshank

the youthful mind, it is quite clear, as in my case, that if *every boy* in these realms was taught the military exercise as I was, they would, as they grew up to manhood, require little or no training to make them sufficiently effective for defence; and if the whole male population of this country capable of bearing arms were to be in such a condition, in such 'fighting order,' there would never be any fighting at all, for no nation, nor all the nations combined together, would ever even so much as dream of invading a country, where they would have a difficulty in landing *hundreds of thousands* of their men, who would have to meet *millions and millions* of well-trained and well-organized men to oppose them, to say nothing of the tossing, and bumping, and scraping they would be likely to have in getting over," he says, "the wooden walls of Old England." But there are Dreadnoughts now.

CHAPTER XIII: *Benjamin Franklin*

EXCEPTING George Washington it is doubtful if any national worthy stands so high in the estimation of Americans as Benjamin Franklin. As a brilliant man of science who discovered the identity of lightning with the electric fluid and was elected a fellow of our Royal Society, as a homely philosopher, and as a wise and patriotic statesman, he has manifold claims to respect and admiration, and well deserves the homage not only of his countrymen, but of the world. It is fortunate that, before he had quite attained the climax of his fame, he set himself to write his autobiography, which is rich in particulars of his early years, and of a charming frankness.

Like many Americans of British extraction, Franklin was deeply interested in his English ancestry, and found that his forefathers had occupied a farm at Ecton, in Northamptonshire, for at least three hundred years. Benjamin himself, however, was a true Yankee. His father, Josiah, had emigrated to New England with his wife and three children about the year 1685, and there he had four more children by the same wife, and ten others by a second, of whom Benjamin was one. He was the youngest of the sons, and the youngest of the family save for two daughters. His mother's maiden name was Abiah Folger, and her father, Peter Folger, was one of the first settlers in New England.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was born at Boston, in Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706. All his elder brothers were apprenticed to different trades, and his father proposed to devote him as 'a tithe of his sons' to the Church. He seemed likely to become a good scholar, for, he tells us, he did not remember a time when he could not read. His uncle and namesake, Benjamin, warmly approved of the design, and good-naturedly offered him his shorthand volumes of sermons, if he would learn shorthand. At the age of eight he was sent to a grammar school, where he did well and was rapidly promoted. The plan soon fell through. As the father of seventeen children, many of them not yet able to provide for themselves, Josiah Franklin shrank from the expense of a college education for Benjamin, and began to question its utility. Accordingly, the boy was withdrawn from the grammar school, and placed under a noted pedagogue named Barnwell to learn writing and arithmetic. Franklin speaks well of his teacher, who taught him to write a good hand, but arithmetic was another matter. He admits that he entirely failed at it.

At ten Benjamin left school altogether. His father, who was a tallow-chandler, took him into his business, and he was employed in cutting wicks for the candles, filling the moulds for cast candles, minding the shop, and running errands. He did not like this occupation and wanted to go to sea, but his father would not hear of it. Benjamin, however, lived close to the water, and spent a good deal of time both in it and on it. He became a strong swimmer

Boys who Became Famous

and a competent boatman. When he and other boys went on board, Benjamin was the recognized captain, and he was the ringleader in various scrapes not connected with the sea.

Bounding the mill-pond was a salt-marsh to which the young urchins often repaired. At high water they would stand on the edge of the pond and fish for minnows, but by dint of much trampling they turned the marshy margin into a quagmire. It then occurred to the ingenious Benjamin to build a wharf on which they might stand, and he pointed out to his companions a big heap of stones, intended for the erection of a new house near the marsh, as well suited for the purpose. So in the evening, after the workmen had left, the horde of boys assembled on the spot and toiled like so many ants at the removal of the stones. Some of them were so heavy that it took two or three boys to carry a single stone. In the end they managed to transport as many as they needed, and the little wharf was constructed. On the following morning the workmen wondered what had become of the stones, and set out to search for them. The secret was soon discovered, and complaint made to the parents of the culprits, who were severely punished.

After Benjamin had been a tallow-chandler for two years, his brother, who was also in the business, married and set up a separate establishment in Rhode Island. The younger brother was much concerned at this turn of events, as there was every appearance that he would be called upon to supply John's place and so become fixed in an employment that his soul

Benjamin Franklin

hated. He did not conceal his abhorrence of the trade, and his father was afraid that if he kept him at it, Benjamin would take French leave and go to sea, like his brother Josiah before him. Mr Franklin, therefore, did his best to find a more agreeable occupation for his son. He took him to see joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, and so forth, at their work, in the hope that Benjamin might be attracted to one or other of these callings and remain a landsman. The boy greatly enjoyed these peregrinations, and ever afterward nothing gave him more pleasure than to watch good workmen handling their tools. Besides that, the experience was of some use to him, since he learnt enough to do small jobs in the house as well as to construct apparatus for scientific experiments, while the ideas were still fresh in his mind. His father finally decided to make a cutler of him, and sent him to his cousin Samuel to see how he would like it. But Samuel held out for an excessive premium, which annoyed Mr Franklin, and in a few days Benjamin was home again.

Whether the tyro would have been any better pleased to be a cutler than a tallow-chandler—both honest trades—we shall not take upon ourselves to determine. One thing is certain—that from his very infancy he was crazy for books, and every penny that came his way went to the purchase of them. Even in those days books were to be had cheap; chapmen hawked them from door to door, and the small volumes were generally known as ‘chap-books.’ Benjamin’s first acquisition was a set of Bunyan’s works. He

Boys who Became Famous

then went on to Burton's *Historical Collections*, in forty volumes. With his love of the sea it is no surprise to learn that he was particularly fond of 'voyages.' His father's little library contained few, if any, works of this class. Most of them dealt controversially with religious topics, and Benjamin found them forbidding. Plutarch's *Lives* were more attractive, and the future statesman derived not only pleasure, but profit from the perusal of them. He read, too, a book of Defoe's—not *Robinson Crusoe*, but *An Essay on Projects*; and another by Dr Mather, entitled *An Essay to do Good*, which had an influence, perhaps, on his modes of thinking and acting in after life.

Benjamin's passion for reading could not escape his father's notice, and Mr Franklin came to the conclusion that the most hopeful course under the circumstances was to have him trained as a printer. One son, James, already followed this profession, and in 1717 he returned from England with printing press and type to open a business in Boston. Benjamin preferred this trade to his father's, but his personal choice was still the sea. In order to crush this aspiration, Mr Franklin was impatient to apprentice him to his brother, but Benjamin proved stubborn. In the end he gave way, and the indenture was signed when he was twelve years of age. It was a dreary prospect—nine long years of apprenticeship; and there was not much consolation in the knowledge that he was to be paid a journeyman's wages during the last year. However, it was to Benjamin's credit

Benjamin Franklin

that, when, in spite of himself, he was to become a printer, he made the best of things, took an intelligent interest in his occupation, and before long was his brother's right-hand man.

A person engaged in the mechanical art of printing does not of necessity see much more of books in their finished state than any other handicraftsman, but Benjamin now obtained easier access to them. Book-selling and printing are allied trades, and young Franklin quite naturally formed acquaintances with booksellers' apprentices. From these friends he occasionally borrowed a small volume, which he took care not to soil and returned with exemplary promptitude. Often, when the book was lent him in the evening, he would sit up reading it the greater part of the night, and give it back in the morning for fear that it should be missed.

It is evident that these little transactions were carried on 'under the rose.' The worthy tradesmen would scarcely have approved of new stock being thumbed by a printer's apprentice; and, had they discovered what was being done behind their backs, would doubtless have vented their indignation on Benjamin's obliging friends. The whole thing, in fact, had a strong flavour of dishonesty. Ere long, however, the youthful book-lover was enabled to gratify his taste in a more legitimate manner. A certain merchant named Adams was in the habit of visiting the printing-office, where he chatted with Benjamin and found in him a kindred spirit. Mr Adams was a well-informed man, who had a nice

Boys who Became Famous

collection of books, and offered to lend the boy any that he cared to read.

Benjamin now turned his attention to 'poetry,' and composed little pieces which made his brother think that his talents might be a source of profit. So James encouraged him to write ballads. One of them, called *The Light-House Tragedy*, was a description of a ship-wreck, whilst another was a sailor's song relating to the capture of a pirate. Both were sorry stuff. However, they were printed, and Benjamin was sent about selling them. The former, which dealt with an actual and recent event, went off famously, and Benjamin was delighted. His father, on the other hand, scented a new danger and dissuaded him from further attempts by criticizing his effusions and warning him that poets were usually beggars. The caution had the desired effect, and Benjamin forsook verse for prose.

There was a boy in the town called John Collins, who was of a bookish turn, and young Franklin and he became great friends. The two seem to have spent much of their time in arguing, and one of the questions they debated was the education of women. Collins maintained that members of the fair sex ought not to apply themselves to study, to which they were not equal. Franklin, more out of contrariety than from conviction, took the opposite side. Collins had a great flow of words, and his antagonist felt that he was being defeated not so much by sound reasoning as by loquacity. So it was decided to adjourn the dispute to paper, and the friends bombarded each

Benjamin Franklin

other with *pros* and *cons* in writing. It happened that Mr Franklin lighted on the essays, and he gave Benjamin the benefit of his opinions about them. In spelling and punctuation he considered his son the superior, but in method and clearness and elegance of expression he awarded the palm to Collins. Benjamin was convinced, and from that time took pains to improve his style. He obtained much help from an odd volume of Addison's *Spectator*, which came into his possession about this time, his plan being to reproduce the subject-matter in his own words and compare his version with the original.

As might be expected, Benjamin did most of his reading and writing at night or before going to work in the morning, but we are sorry to observe that he annexed Sundays also for the purpose, secreting himself in the printing-house, so as to avoid attending public worship. This was a strong point with his father, and Benjamin himself thought it his duty to go to church—only he could not spare the time.

When he was about sixteen he read a book which contained a passage recommending a vegetarian diet. Benjamin determined to go in for it. His brother James was unmarried, and he and his apprentices boarded with a family. The younger Franklin's refusal to eat meat caused some inconvenience, and he was often scolded for it. But the book, which had led to his conversion, provided recipes for boiled potatoes, boiled rice, hasty pudding, etc. ; so Benjamin told his brother that if he would give him weekly half the sum paid for his board, he would board himself.

Boys who Became Famous

James at once consented, and Benjamin found that he could save half of the money, which naturally went to buy books. Incidentally, there was another advantage, or so it seemed to him. When his brother and the others went home to their meals, he stayed behind in the printing-house and dispatched a light meal consisting of a biscuit, a handful of raisins, or a tart from the pastry-cook's, with a glass of water. This ceremony was soon ended, and then he settled down to study till his brother's return. It may be objected that this meagre allowance was hardly enough to support a growing lad, but Franklin, who always thought more of his mind than his body, believed that by lessening the strain on his digestive organs he increased his intellectual powers, and ascribed his more rapid progress to 'that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension which generally attend temperance in eating and drinking.' Owing to these abstemious habits Benjamin was able to master with the greatest ease a subject that had twice baffled him in his school-days, and became an expert arithmetician.

We need not follow Franklin in his detailed expositions of all that he did with and for his mind during this period. Nor do we feel sure that in either example or precept he is always a safe guide. It is not now deemed wise to condemn growing boys to a Spartan diet, while nothing could be much more tedious than the rule Franklin prescribes of qualifying every sentence by some expression like 'I conceive,' or 'I apprehend.' Modesty is an excellent thing, but the constant use of such phrases would give stiffness

Benjamin Franklin

to conversation, and probably most people would call it affectation. At the same time Franklin was quite right in objecting to the noisy assertion of one's opinions, as if nobody else could possibly be correct.

What led Franklin to insist so strongly on this virtue of modesty? Was it the editorial *We*? Very likely. In 1720 or 1721 his brother began to print the second newspaper ever published in New England. Some of James's friends tried to dissuade him from the venture on the ground that one journal was enough, but he persevered, and Benjamin became an anonymous contributor, disguising his hand and slipping his compositions at night under the door of the printing-house. Having been found and admired by the unsuspecting James and his literary advisers, they were duly published. This went on for some time, and at last Benjamin revealed the secret of the authorship. After that his brother's friends looked with more respect on the boy, one of whose duties was to carry round the newspapers to customers, but James was displeased. He was afraid, he said, Benjamin would grow vain, but the truth was, perhaps, that he was jealous and vexed that he should have been deceived.

This and other matters occasioned strained relations between them. James regarded himself as his brother's master, and treated him as he would any other apprentice. Often, when in a passion, he beat him. From time to time an appeal was made to their father, who nearly always decided in Benjamin's favour. The boy was sick of his apprenticeship,

Boys who Became Famous

and only wished there were some means of ending it.

Ere long the wished-for opportunity presented itself. A political article gave offence to the Assembly, and, as James declined to give up the name of the writer, he was censured and ordered to be kept in prison for a month. Benjamin was also examined by the Council, but being no more than an apprentice, was dismissed with a caution. When his brother was released, he was served with a notice that 'James Franklin should no longer print the newspaper called *The New England Courant*.' It was thought undesirable to change the name of the journal; and, as a way out of the difficulty, it was decided to print it in the name of Benjamin Franklin. For the sake of appearances, and to avoid trouble with the Assembly, the old indenture was cancelled, but a new indenture for the remainder of the term was drawn up, which Benjamin was required to sign. The existence of this document had to be kept a secret, and, apart from moral obligations, was so much waste paper. That Benjamin knew, and resolved to be off.

James, highly incensed, made it impossible for him to get work at any other printing-shop at Boston, where Benjamin felt himself a little compromised by his brother's political adventure. This time his father took the part of James, and was certain to place every obstacle in Benjamin's way of seeking employment at New York, which appeared the only alternative to a renewal of hateful servitude in

Benjamin Franklin

his brother's establishment. His friend Collins now proved an useful ally, and induced the captain of a sloop to take him on board. In three days, therefore, Benjamin Franklin found himself in New York, three hundred miles from home, to begin a new life at the age of seventeen.

CHAPTER XIV: *George Frederic Watts*

THE name 'Watts' has twice been rendered famous—first by a great divine and hymn-writer, and, secondly, by a great artist, the subject of our present sketch, who disliked it. 'Being a lover of the beautiful,' he said, 'its want of music is distasteful to me ; and for this reason, when I was younger, I often had serious thoughts of changing it.' Watts went on to speak as if he would have preferred to have inherited some noble surname like Howard or Stanley, although he agreed that it was better to do good work in the world than merely to hold a high place in society.

This weakness of a highly gifted man was probably due to the belief, true or false, that his ancestors, of whom he knew very little, had moved in a more exalted circle than that into which he was born. 'I belong to a family,' he said, 'that has gone down in the world.' As a matter of fact his grandfather had made musical instruments in Hereford, and appears to have been, in a general way, a cabinet-maker. George Watts, the father of the artist, left the paternal workshop and set up as a pianoforte manufacturer in London. He was fond of curious experiments and ambitious to shine as an inventor ; and, as the result, his business did not prosper.

George Frederic Watts was the eldest child of his father's second marriage, and was born in Queen Street, Bryanston Square, on February 23, 1817.

George Frederic Watts

His mother, Harriet, was a widow when she married the distressed pianoforte-maker, and an invalid. In the winter of 1823 her four little boys were attacked with measles and three of them died, George Frederic, the most delicate, alone surviving. In 1826 the loving mother was carried off by consumption; and the house-keeping passed into the hands of two grown-up daughters of the first marriage.

George Watts was an intelligent man and a connoisseur in art. Even in his Hereford days he indulged his taste for good engravings, and amongst his most treasured possessions was an etching by Rembrandt and a few prints by Greuze. He practised both painting and drawing, but was an indifferent artist. He was something of a bibliophile, though his means did not allow of his forming a large collection. Still, what books he had were in good editions, and valuable. They included L'Estrange's *Fables*, plays of the reign of Charles II, and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. Much to his son's regret, these volumes were lost or sold instead of remaining in the family as heirlooms. Little George was the object of his father's tender care; and, if the good man destroyed his own sketches and paintings as not worthy of preservation, he showed more respect for his son's earliest attempts, carefully dating his original drawings, as well as hoarding the engravings of which he made very creditable copies.

Since the days of King George IV London has undergone vast changes, and, in the neighbourhood of the little boy's home, where there are now bricks and

Boys who Became Famous

mortar, there were pleasant meadows, studded with buttercups and gay with wild flowers. One circumstance connected with these haunts lingered in his memory, and deserves passing mention. He had been exploring some ground where timber was being removed and sat down on one end of a fallen trunk. Presently a grave, dignified man, arrayed in a long black cloak, drew near and sat himself down on the opposite end. No words were spoken, but George gazed with interest at the fine face of the stranger. It was Edward Irving, the famous preacher.

To return to George's beginnings as an artist. One of his earliest drawings, preserved but not dated, bore the inscription 'Sisyphus,' written in his own round childish hand. Watts could not remember whether it was an original or a copy; and as to the date, if the handwriting be taken as a clue, the drawing must have been made when he was about ten. His biographer, however, considers that it was earlier, belonging probably to the age of six or seven. It was a strange subject for a child to handle, for Sisyphus, it will be recollected, was that king of Corinth who, according to the fable, was condemned in the underworld to roll a huge stone up a hill down which it always rolled again. The drawing is said to have been very descriptive, the strong muscles of the unfortunate Sisyphus being limned in firm and rather black strokes.

As a boy, the artist suffered from frequent attacks of headache, giddiness, and sickness, and in that respect his case was very similar to that of another

George Frederic Watts

celebrated painter, Samuel Prout. The root of the trouble is obscure, one theory being that it was due to eye-strain. It is more likely to have been constitutional. Watts was of a highly nervous temperament and ill-fitted to withstand the worry of family misfortunes, the influence of which he could not escape. We have referred to Samuel Prout. Prout bore his sufferings with serenity, but George Watts was impatient and irritable, and subject to gusts of passion. He had sufficient control of himself not to find fault with his father or sisters explicitly, but, none the less, these outbursts were anticipated by the members of the household with dread. On an average his headaches came on once a week and lasted a couple of days, during which he was completely prostrated.

At such times he was greatly comforted by the companionship of a tame sparrow, which would perch on his head, as he lay in bed, and eat out of his plate. To his unspeakable sorrow his feathered friend one day dropped dead at his feet; and it added not a little to his grief that he was the innocent cause of the tragedy. He was shutting up the sparrow for the night, when the bird suddenly popped out its head, which was crushed in the doorway. Years afterward he remarked, 'I feel the sorrow as keenly to-day as if it happened yesterday.'

Most young people feel happy on their birthdays, when they receive presents or affectionate congratulations. Poor Watts was miserable. He did not look his age, and was ashamed to think how backward

Boys who Became Famous

he was. The state of his health made it impossible for him to attend school regularly, and he had to acquire knowledge as best he might. He was taught to read tolerably early, and his father helped him with a choice of books—fit, though few. In later life Watts was severe on those who did not make the most of their opportunities when at school, but in one sense he was a lucky fellow, as he escaped the drudgery of grammar and construing, and was able to read the *Iliad*—in a translation—for pure enjoyment. To the ordinary schoolboy painfully struggling with the Greek text, of which his master has forgotten the difficulties, this pleasure is almost inconceivable, but Keats, who was no classical scholar, knew it. When he first looked into Chapman's Homer, he says he felt like

*Some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken.*

To Watts Homer's poems, with their wealth of incident, would have been as agreeable as Sir Walter Scott's or Miss Austen's novels, which he also read in his enforced leisure. On Sundays all such literature had to be laid aside, and he was required to devote his attention to the Bible and the Prayer Book. Only one exception was allowed—Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He used to copy the pictures in the Bible and in the Queen Anne Prayer Book, which contained an entry of his birth. One of the illustrations in the latter was remarkable enough. It showed the eye of

George Frederic Watts

the Almighty in the sky, and, radiating from it, a shaft of light which beat upon the head of the conspirator Guy Fawkes, who was depicted with a lantern, engaged in his villainous task.

George became well acquainted with the Bible, and would often repeat the stories in the Old Testament with quaint touches of his own, but there were some features in his early training that aroused his dislike. For instance, when quite a little boy, he was told of a man who omitted to read the Bible during the week, and when he took it down from the shelf on Sunday, was struck dead as a punishment for his neglect. George could not believe that God would be so unjust, and was horrified beyond measure.

The obstacles that interfered with his education in the ordinary school subjects, prevented him from receiving methodical instruction in the rules of art. His biographer thinks that this was 'quite unnecessary' in the case of Watts, whose enthusiasm and capacity for taking pains rendered him independent of outside help. Watts himself seems to have been of much the same way of thinking, as he laid it down that in art 'everything is to be learnt and very little to be taught.' The use of the pencil seems to have come natural to him as a form of self-expression, and he could not recollect a time when he was not addicted to it.

But, even as a boy, Watts had artistic friends, who, though they might not have given him formal lessons, were certainly useful in inspiring ideals and furnishing practical hints. A partner of his father, a Hanoverian

Boys who Became Famous

named Behnes, had three sons, two of whom, Henry and William, adopted the profession of art. William Behnes had a studio in Dean Street, Soho, and little George Watts, when ten years of age, had the run of the place. He cared more, however, for a deformed brother of William Behnes, who was called Charles. The latter was all that the sculptor was not—moral, intellectual, and business-like. Through Charles Behnes little Watts was introduced to a miniature painter, who showed him how to use oil colours and set him to copy a painting by Sir Peter Lely, which the boy did very successfully.

Up to this time it seems to have been assumed by George's father and friends that he was a born genius, and it was probably with some degree of confidence that Mr Watts submitted several of the boy's drawings to Sir Martin Archer Shee, the President of the Royal Academy. The result was a check. Sir Martin looked at the drawings, and observed, 'I can see no reason why your son should take up the profession of art.' In spite of this unfavourable verdict, the father's optimism was unshaken, while little George went on painting and drawing all day, singing most of the time like a bird. Meanwhile he kept up his acquaintance with Charles Behnes, who supplied him with scientific primers and talked to him about Shakespeare, Virgil, Ossian, and other literary favourites.

Young Watts had always been remarkable for the fidelity with which he copied works of art. Mention has been made of a Lely, his copy of which repro-

George Frederic Watts

duced nearly all the characteristics of that celebrated portrait-painter. The thought now occurred to him of playing a practical joke on his kind friends, which he did by painting a portrait in the style of Van Dyck. The head was his own, while the costume was that fashionable in the days of the First Charles. The picture was thrust up the chimney to mellow, and when it had acquired the proper appearance of age, he conveyed it to William Behnes's studio and diffidently announced that he believed he had found a Van Dyck. Behnes examined it carefully. 'Well,' said the sculptor, 'I would not venture to say that it is by Van Dyck, but it is certainly by no mean hand.' George thereupon acknowledged the fraud, and Behnes, rather huffed, exclaimed, 'Why the deuce don't you always paint like that?'

If Sir Martin Shee could see no particular merit in the boy's drawings, an artist of greater fame was of a different opinion. One day George Watts was walking along the street, sketch-book in hand, when a gentleman laid his hand upon his shoulder, and inquired kindly, 'May a fellow-student look at your work?' Having glanced at the drawings, the artist commended them, and told his new acquaintance that he should be pleased to see him in his studio. But George never went—he seems to have been too shy, and the two were destined not to meet again. The artist was Benjamin Haydon, who will always be remembered as the first to proclaim the worth of that fine collection of Greek statuary—the Elgin Marbles.

One of George Watts's virtues was early rising.

Boys who Became Famous

Later in life, he was chatting with friends on this subject, and some one expressed the opinion that getting up early was much harder for boys than for their elders. Watts agreed that this was so. 'Don't I know that very well,' he remarked, 'for I could only overcome the difficulty myself by not going to bed at all; I used not to undress, but rolled myself in a thick dressing-gown, and lay on the floor of my studio, sometimes on two chairs, until I had taught myself to awake and get up with the sun.' The habit was life-long. Even when he was eighty-seven, Watts was up and at work as soon as it was light.

The young artist, as we have seen, was almost entirely self-taught; and, strange as it may appear, there was very little teaching that was worth having even in the schools of the Royal Academy, as he found on his admission, April 30, 1835. 'There was no teaching at all,' he said afterward; 'there was no test—no examination of the pupils.' It is much to his credit, therefore, that long before this time he had realized the importance of a knowledge of anatomy as the foundation of good drawing. He studied from casts, he studied from the skeleton; and thus his drawings of the gods, kings, knights and ladies, with which he had amused his childhood, were singularly correct in outline. He was not yet sixteen, when he obtained small commissions for portraits in pencil or coloured chalk, his fee being five shillings. From that time it was a pleasure to him to think he did not cost his father a penny. The poor man was in a worse position than ever, and glad to fall back on

George Frederic Watts

any work with a promise of remuneration, such as teaching music, tuning pianos, and acting as clerk. At length, these resources failed him, and it was George's lot to support him till he died in 1845. It may, therefore, be said of him, what cannot be stated of all great artists and clever men, that he was a good son.

CHAPTER XV: *Bertrand du Guesclin*

BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN is one of the few heroes of the Middle Ages whose boyhood can be recorded in any detail, and the reason is—that he was ugly! A chronicler of the time describes him, when grown up, as of middle height, brown complexion, snub-nosed, green-eyed, broad-shouldered, with long arms and small hands. We shall see presently that his parents regarded him as a libel on the family. That family was one of the oldest in Brittany, and fabled to be descended from a Moorish king called Aquin, who established himself in the province in the eighth century and built the castle of Glay or Glay-Aquin. The name ‘Guesclin’ was spelt in all sorts of ways, and one form of it was Glayaquin. This evidence, so far as it goes, may be taken as confirming the legend, which in other respects is doubtful. The story was that Aquin took up arms against Charlemagne, who came to Brittany to punish him, and that Aquin was defeated. It is rather awkward for the legend that Charlemagne never was in Brittany, but the point is not what happened, but what the du Guesclins believed.

The future Constable of France, who belonged to a younger branch of this great family, was born in the manor-house of La Motte-Broons, near Rennes, probably about 1320, although Guizot places the event some six years before. It was quite a modest country-house, with little to distinguish it from the abodes

Bertrand du Guesclin

of rich peasants, beyond two or three turrets and a dovecot. Bertrand was the eldest of the ten children—four sons and six daughters—of Regnault du Guesclin and his wife, Jeanne. As a rule, the first-born son occupied a privileged position in feudal mansions, and received more consideration than his brothers and sisters, from the fact that he was the heir, who would in due time gird on his father's sword and maintain the glorious traditions of his house. This was not at all the case with Bertrand. He was so ugly that his parents looked upon him with hatred and aversion, and only wished he could be drowned. Such was their feeling of shame that they could hardly bear him in their presence, and were tempted to disown him in the company of strangers.

Bertrand, therefore, was brought up not as a gentleman, but as a rustic. He was not allowed to play with his brothers, his companions being the village children, with whom he was fond of wrestling and fighting—particularly the latter. The inhumanity of his parents had a bad effect on the boy, embittering his character and making him stubborn and rebellious. He inherited his full share of the family pride, was extremely rough, and much stronger than most boys of his age. People might scorn and humiliate him as they pleased, but they soon found he was not to be trifled with.

It was the custom for the whole family down to the youngest children to take their meals at the same table. There was one exception—Bertrand, who

Boys who Became Famous

was banished to the corner. When he was barely six, and the rest were about to enjoy their dinner as usual, suddenly up got Bertrand, and waving a big stick, he shouted, 'So all are to be seated except me. You eat first, and I have to wait, as if I were a labourer. I mean to be at table with you, and if you say a word to me, I will knock over everything—bread, meat and wine.'

Alarmed, it may be, by his determined look and threatening gestures, one of his brothers beckoned to him quietly to take a place among them. He did so, and was stretching out his hand toward a dish before him, when his mother lost her temper and cried, 'Bertrand, if you don't go away, you will be flogged.' In a moment the boy sprang to his feet, upset the table, and smashed everything upon it. It was good-bye to bread, wine, and capon. 'Good Heavens!' cried his mother, aghast at his behaviour. 'What a carter! Oh, I wish he were dead! I am sure he will do no credit to his family, for he has neither good sense nor good manners.'

On another occasion, when a nun, a friend of Bertrand's mother, was in the house, there was a similar scene, and the good woman had a narrow escape from Bertrand's violence, but she had more insight than his relations, and beneath his clownish exterior and rough ways she perceived that there lay the seeds of a great and distinguished character. The boy possessed courage and independence, and she foretold that one day his reputation would exceed that of every other living Frenchman.

Bertrand du Guesclin

When he was very young, Bertrand used to say of himself, 'I am ugly, and shall never please the ladies, but, on the other hand, I shall always find means to make my enemies respect me.' He kept his word. He could not, or would not, learn to read; and his highest accomplishment in penmanship was to sign his own name *Bertran*. Very few soldiers, however, were entitled to be styled, like our Henry I, Beauclerc, so that his educational deficiencies would not have attracted notice in those days as they would to-day, when military officers yield to no class of the community in professional and general knowledge. If Bertrand was indifferent to book-learning, he by no means neglected physical exercises, in which he acquired extraordinary skill and address, and this, added to his native valour, formed an excellent preparation for a military career of wonderful brilliance.

One of the games in which he hardened himself and at the same time gained the habit of command was fighting. He would collect all the boys of the neighbourhood, and, having divided them into two detachments, make them battle with each other under his orders. Bertrand was not content to play the part of umpire in these contests, but himself plunged into the thick of the fray. He would watch to see which side was beginning to lose, and forthwith go to the rescue and strive to restore the fortunes of the fight. After a while he would give the signal and the struggle would end, for the boys never dreamed of disobeying. On the conclusion of the fight, he would take the battered heroes to some inn and pay for refreshments,

Boys who Became Famous

always supposing that he had money about him. If not, the refreshments were provided just the same, as Bertrand was allowed credit. He is said to have been punctual in paying these debts, even if he had to rob his father of a horse for the purpose. He would go to Rennes to sell the animal.

The boy returned from these mimic combats with his clothes in shreds and his face bruised and bleeding ; and his parents—what parents would not ?—strongly disapproved of the custom. Finding that he took no notice of their remonstrances, but continued to behave, as his mother expressed it, like a clown, they thought the best thing that could be done was to shut him up in an isolated room, where he was kept a prisoner for four months. One day, in a rage, he fell upon the chambermaid who was bringing him his food, snatched away the bunch of keys she was carrying, shut her up in his place, and fled from the castle.

He then roamed about the country, glad to be free and exulting in the fresh air. Presently he descried a peasant at work with two of his father's horses, and seizing one of them, jumped on its back, in defiance of the peasant's protests, and rode off to Rennes, where an uncle of his was living. His relative received him kindly and allowed the boy to remain with him for a year. At the end of that time his father's anger had cooled down, and the refining influence of his uncle's household had produced a beneficial effect on Bertrand, who had grown more civilized. In this state he returned to La Motte-Broons. He now abjured the rough sports, which had delighted him as a child, and

Bertrand du Guesclin

turned his attention to jousts and tournaments, in which gentlemen competed on horseback, lance in hand. He became very skilful in these martial exercises, and at last his father began to look upon him with some degree of favour.

When Bertrand was about eighteen, a grand tournament was announced to take place at Rennes in honour of the wedding of Joan the Cripple, daughter of the Duke of Brittany, with Charles de Châtillon. On the appointed day there arrived a number of gallant knights arrayed in magnificent armour and mounted on splendid chargers. There arrived also a thick-set young man, without armour, whose ugly features were matched by his clumsy steed—contemptuously described as a ‘miller’s horse.’ It was, of course, Bertrand.

The jousts began, fine strokes were exchanged by the doughty champions, and Bertrand, who was compelled by his poor equipment to remain an on-looker, was consumed with envy. Presently one of the knights, tired out with his exertions, quitted the lists and went back to the town, followed by Bertrand, who boldly entered the room where he was removing his armour, and, throwing himself at the knight’s feet, begged that it might be lent him. The knight graciously consented, armed Bertrand with his own hands, and gave him his horse to ride.

Entering the lists with lowered visor, Bertrand accepted a challenge, and at the first shock unhorsed his opponent, who exclaimed, ‘Who is my assailant? Never was lance aimed better!’ Others also wished

Boys who Became Famous

to ascertain the name of the new-comer, but Bertrand replied that it would only be revealed when one of them had struck off his helmet.

Among the combatants was Bertrand's father, Regnault du Guesclin, who, previous to his son's arrival, had captained a victorious party, including the dismounted knight. Eager to avenge his follower's defeat, he challenged the unknown horseman, who at first accepted, but, recognizing his father's escutcheon, lowered his lance and returned to his place. Another knight, convinced that it was not fear that had dictated the refusal, sent him a fresh challenge, which was not declined. He, too, succumbed. After that, Bertrand had fifteen encounters, in all of which he was successful. At last a Norman knight, of great renown for his skill, succeeded in forcing up his visor, and, to the great amazement of his friends, Bertrand was revealed as the conqueror hero. His father's face beamed with pleasure, and going up to him, he remarked, 'Gentle son, I promise to treat you henceforth less shamefully than I have done in the past. You shall have horses and gold and silver to your heart's content, and for the valour you have displayed this day, you shall go where you like to win glory.'

The prize of the tournament was awarded to Bertrand, and he accompanied his father to their home. When his mother heard that he had carried off the prize, her delight knew no bounds, and she called to mind the nun's prophecy mentioned above. From that time Bertrand regularly took part in the tournaments of the district, and he began to distinguish

Bertrand du Guesclin

himself in endless battles, always to the accompaniment of the war-cry that he had adopted after his first victory—*Notre-Dame-Guesclin*.

Du Guesclin was a contemporary of our Black Prince, and while that warrior's star was in the ascendant, met with varying success, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. Eventually, however, he succeeded in beating the English out of the whole of France with the exception of a few towns like Calais, which remained a jewel of the English crown till the reign of Mary Tudor. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the estimation of his countrymen, Bertrand du Guesclin ranks as a deliverer second only to Joan of Arc.

CHAPTER XVI: *Alfred* *Tennyson*

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON' in his latest days, but for more than seventy years simply 'Alfred Tennyson,' to follow the description on his title-pages, though in society he was, of course, Mr Tennyson. Our brief narrative is confined to his boyhood, when he had small expectation of a peerage and was content to be known as 'Alfred' or 'Tennyson,' according to his whereabouts. His elevation to the peerage had a touch of poetical justice, because his capricious grandfather, a country squire, had bequeathed his estate to his second son, Charles, instead of his eldest son, George Clayton, the poet's father, and that in spite of a vigorous remonstrance on the part of a neighbour, who said to him, 'George, if you do this you'll certainly be damned, you will indeed.' When the poet became Lord Tennyson, the precedence of his branch of the family was re-established.

George Clayton Tennyson did not starve. He entered the Church, and as those were times when the interests of clergymen with influential friends were deemed more important than the welfare of their flocks, he managed financially to do pretty well, though not so well as if he had succeeded to his rightful inheritance. He was what is termed a pluralist—that is, he was at the same time Rector of Somersby, Rector of Wood Enderby, Vicar of Great Grimsby, and Incumbent of Benniworth. Of course, he could

Alfred Tennyson

not live in all four parishes, and doubtless employed curates in two of them, but, while he resided in Somersby, he seems to have served Wood Enderby as well. He was a man of splendid physique, standing six feet two inches, and had plenty of energy. Tim Green, the village rat-catcher, bore witness to that. "I remember the oud Doctor," he said. 'What a clip he used to goä betweeän them chooörches o' Somersby and Enderby.' Those who know Tennyson's dialect poems will recognize the brogue, and it may not be necessary to tell them that Somersby and Enderby are in Lincolnshire.

The Rev. George Tennyson was entitled to place after his name the symbolical letters M.A. and LL.D., and was very able and learned, but he had no true vocation for his sacred office, and was subject to fits of profound melancholy. These so affected his son Alfred, that more than once the boy groped his way to the churchyard on a pitch-black night and, throwing himself on a grave, prayed that he, Alfred, might die.

Alfred Tennyson was born at Somersby Rectory on August 6, 1809, the same year which witnessed the birth of his great friend, William Ewart Gladstone. Two days later he was baptized by his father, possibly because the child showed signs of delicacy, but the present Lord Tennyson draws attention to the rubric commanding people to "defer not the baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth." During his infancy the poet was attacked with convulsions and was thrice believed to be dead.

Boys who Became Famous

The boy was one of a large family. Altogether there were twelve young Tennysons—eight sons and four daughters; Alfred being the fourth child. The boys pretended to be knights and held mock tournaments. Their games were not so rough as those in which Bertrand du Guesclin revelled as a growing lad, yet contain a distinct reminder of them. The poet told Mrs Ritchie, the daughter of Thackeray, that sometimes they were “champions and warriors, defending a field, or a stone heap. Or again they would set up opposing camps with a king in the midst of each. The king was a willow-wand stuck in the ground, with an outer circle of immortals, to defend him, of firmer, stiffer sticks. Then each party would come with stones, hurling at each other’s king and trying to overthrow him.”

One scene of Master Alfred’s exploits was Baumber’s Farm, an old red-bricked building which boasted an embattled parapet and is said to have been the work of the celebrated architect and dramatist Vanbrugh. It stood just outside the rectory garden. The motto of Tennyson’s juvenile poem ‘Mariana’ is ‘Mariana in the moated grange’—taken from Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. It has pleased some wise people to identify the moated grange of the poem with Baumber’s Farm, and it was gradually becoming known by that name, when Tennyson exploded the idea. ‘The Moated Grange,’ he wrote, ‘is an imaginary house in the fen. I never so much as dreamed of Baumber’s farm as the abode of Mariana, and the character of Baumber was so ludicrously unlike the

Alfred Tennyson

Northern Farmer, that it really makes me wonder how anyone can have the face to invent such stories.'

Alfred and his brothers and sisters were great story-inventors. They had a pleasant habit of composing tales in the form of letters, which were placed under the vegetable dishes at dinner-time and read out at the conclusion of the meal. The future poet's contributions varied from humorous tales to highly dramatic recitals; and he was easily first in sensational narratives. Everybody in those days was talking of the rival warriors, Napoleon and Wellington, and naturally enough the children wove the achievements of those heroes into prose and verse. Somersby, however, was such an out-of-the-way place that the elder children heard nothing of the battle of Waterloo for some long time, and all they could remember was that "the coach drove through Somersby, the horses decorated with flowers and ribbons, and this might have been in honour of Wellington's great victory."

Cecilia, the youngest but one, who afterward married Professor Lushington, has drawn a pretty picture of the way they spent winter evenings. Alfred would take her on his knee, and with Arthur and Matilda leaning on either side and baby Horatio nestling between his legs, recount to these eager listeners marvellous stories of knights-errant riding through thick forests and rescuing ill-used maidens. Or his imagination would conjure up huge mountains infested with dragons, whose scaly sides were pierced by the pointed lances of the said knights. He had

Boys who Became Famous

also tales in plenty about Indians, demons, and witches. As a variation on these performances, he would sometimes join his brothers and sisters in acting old English plays, in which he displayed so much talent that it was expected he would make his name as an actor.

Alfred was seven years old when the important question was addressed to him: 'Will you go to sea or to school?' He preferred school, which he promised himself would be a little heaven. It turned out to be more like a little hell. He was sent to the Grammar School at Louth, which was presided over by the Rev. J. Waite, an inveterate flogger. Soon after his entrance he sat down on the stone steps of the building on a cold winter morning and shed bitter tears because, as a new boy, he had been beaten about the head by a big bully. When Tennyson was an old man, the head master of Louth School gave a holiday in honour of the poet, who, as a former pupil, reflected so much glory on the institution. The Laureate was not displeased, but at the same time was candid enough to remark, 'How I did hate that school! The only good I ever got from it was the memory of the words *sonus desiliensis aquae*, and of an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows. I wrote an English poem there, for one of the Jacksons; the only line I recollect is "While bleeding heroes lie along the shore."'

Whilst at Louth School, Tennyson marched in a procession of boys bedecked with ribbons at the proclamation of George IV. Among the spectators

Alfred Tennyson

was an old woman, who made the flattering observation that the boys were "the prettiest part of the show." At another time he perched himself on a wall and was in the act of delivering a political speech to his school-mates, when he was interrupted by the usher, who commanded him to step down, and offensively inquired whether he wished to be the parish beadle.

Professor Hales was at the school long after Tennyson had left, but in his time the bad old traditions were still flourishing, and we are tempted to draw on his lively description of the methods of discipline as a commentary on the text, 'How I did hate that school!'

"They (the masters) were not cruel-hearted men; to make ears tingle, bones ache, life generally a burden and a misery, was no extreme pleasure to them. Small specimens of humanity leaping and dancing and wringing their hands, and shrieking as if engaged in the worship of Baal, who perchance slept and must needs be awakened, could scarcely have been agreeable objects of contemplation; but they knew not of any other method in which instruction might possibly be imparted. . . . To show how completely we lay at the mercy of the headmaster, I perhaps ought to state that we generally sat, when 'up' to him, upon one long form, opposite to which was a chair, on which was seated the boy who was 'going on.' Our master adopted for himself the peripatetic, or, more strictly perhaps, the ana- or kata-patetic method; his beat was immediately in front of the form on which we sat, so that he could get at the centre

Boys who Became Famous

class as he paced up and down. He very frequently availed himself of his opportunities ; and with the masterly dexterity and quickness that distinguished him, often succeeded in 'touching up' each one of us in the course of a single promenade. But most pitiable was the position of the poor boy on the chair on the other side of the master's line of walk. That chair was a sort of altar on which boy-sacrifices were offered. There the youth sat, exposed on every side to the blast of blows and boxes that might descend upon him at any moment, which were sure to descend upon him sooner or later in a hideous hurricane."

Alfred was withdrawn from this place of horrors in 1820, and thenceforth his education, like that of his brothers, was conducted by his father, who brushed up his Greek in the interest of his pupils. The 'old Doctor' was a good all-round scholar, and among his acquirements was a sound knowledge of Hebrew and Syriac. He had a competent acquaintance with mathematics, natural science, and the fine arts, and continued to teach his sons those subjects until they matriculated at Cambridge. Horace has been called the pocket-companion of a man of the world, but Horace, as drummed into his brother-poet Tennyson, was an ineffable bore. He never forgot this infliction, and would often bemoan his hard lot, saying, 'They use *me* as a lesson book at schools, and they will call me "that horrible Tennyson."' It was not till many years after boyhood that I could like Horace. Byron expressed what I felt. "Then farewell Horace, whom I hated so." Indeed I was so over-dosed with

Alfred Tennyson

Horace that I hardly do him justice now that I am old.'

Even as a boy Tennyson worshipped Byron. He was fourteen when he heard of the poet's death (April 19, 1824)—'A day,' he says, 'when the whole world seemed to be darkened for me'—and he carved on a rock in his favourite hollow of Holywell 'Byron is dead'—a reminiscence perhaps of *Lycidas*. A copy of Milton was included, as a matter of course, in his father's fine library, which was always open to the boys; and Milton is named as one of the authors whose works were most thumbed by them. Others were Shakespeare, Burke, Goldsmith, Rabelais, Sir William Jones, Addison, Swift, Defoe, Cervantes, Bunyan and Buffon—a truly surprising list for such young readers.

In the present Lord Tennyson's biography of his illustrious father the opening chapter has no pleasanter page than that in which the poet's younger brother Arthur recounts some memories of the days when they were boys together. There is nothing like first-hand knowledge of men and incidents; its intimate touches have a sureness and a charm that fill a later writer with despair. So let Mr Arthur Tennyson speak at large:

"A scene comes before me of Frederick, Charles, and Alfred having a regular scrimmage with lesson-books and of my father suddenly coming round the corner. I didn't wait to see what happened, but bolted; our father's tall form appearing was generally at such moments the signal for a general 'scatter,' but although very severe, he had great tenderness of heart.

Boys who Became Famous

I can well recollect him by my bedside, almost weeping, when I had a bad paroxysm of croup. Alfred had the same tenderness in spite of his somewhat gruff manner ; he was notable among his brothers for strength and independence of character. His was a very gentle nature, and I never remember quarrelling with him. He was very kind to us who were younger than he was, and I remember his tremendous excitement when he got hold of Bewick¹ for the first time ; how he paced up and down the lawn for hours studying him, and how he kept rushing in to us in the school-room to show us some of the marvellous woodcuts, and to let us have a share in this new pleasure of his.

“ Indeed, he was always a great reader ; and if he went alone he would take a book with him on his walk. One day in the winter, the snow being deep, he did not hear the South Mail coming up behind. Suddenly ‘ Ho ! ho ! ’ from the coachman roused him. He looked up, and found a horse’s nose and eyes over his shoulder, as if reading his book. Like my father, Alfred had a great head, so that when I put on his hat it came down over my face. He too, like my father, had a powerful frame, a splendid physique, and we used to have gymnastics over the large beam in his attic den, which was in the gable, westward. Alfred and I often took long rambles together, and on one particular afternoon, when we were in the home fields talking of our respective futures, he said most emphatically, ‘ Well, Arthur, I mean to be famous.’ For our less active amusements we carved in wood

¹ Bewick’s *British Birds* is probably the work referred to.

Alfred Tennyson

and moulded with clay, and one of my earliest recollections of Alfred is watching him form with clay a Gothic archway in the bole of an old tree."

Mr Arthur Tennyson remarks in a parenthesis that his brother from his earliest years felt that he was a poet, and seriously endeavoured to make himself worthy of his high calling. He began with an imitation of Thomson's *Seasons* when about eight, Thomson being the only poet he then knew. When about ten or eleven, having become fascinated with Pope's *Homer's Iliad*, he wrote hundreds of lines in the metre of that translation. Two years later he wrote an epic of six thousand lines in the manner of Sir Walter Scott, reeling off seventy lines at a time, which he used to shout, going about the fields in the dark. At fourteen he was the author of a drama in blank verse, which he kept till 1890, at any rate. Criticizing this and a few other things—most of his early efforts were destroyed—he observed, 'It seems to me, I wrote them all in perfect metre.' No wonder the 'old Doctor' was proud of his son. He used to say, 'If Alfred die, one of our greatest poets will have gone'; and again, 'I should not wonder if Alfred were to revive the greatness of his relative, William Pitt.' The great statesman, by the way, was a very, very distant relative, and might be more properly described as a connection.

Although he was so attached to books and poetry, Alfred was a thorough boy. He and his brothers cultivated the acquaintance of Tim Green the Rat-catcher before-mentioned, and were a perfect plague

Boys who Became Famous

to the neighbouring gamekeepers, whose traps they used to spring. More than one of them swore that, if they caught 'that there young gentleman who was for ever springing the gins,' they would give him a sousing in the pond. The boy had a pet owl, and his mother a pet monkey; and the two creatures were not over-friendly. The monkey was a decided 'character'; he would scrub the floors in imitation of the housemaid, and had a remarkable fancy for singeing the hair on his back at a candle. As a general rule he seems to have stood rather in awe of the owl, but one day he made a rush at his rival, and, seizing him by the leg, pitched him to the ground. 'It was one of the most comical scenes,' said Tennyson, 'that I have ever witnessed.'

One last touch, which we owe to Fitzgerald. "Like Wordsworth on the mountains," he said, "Alfred too, when a lad abroad on the wold, sometimes of a night with the shepherd, watched not only the flock on the greensward, but also

*The fleecy star that bears
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas."*

Walter Scott, you will find, was fond of shepherding—an interesting link between embryo poets.

CHAPTER XVII: *Charles Dickens*

CHARLES DICKENS, who set out on his literary career with the queer name of 'Boz' and became, if not the greatest, one of the greatest of English novelists, has a special claim on the cordial gratitude of boys. Until he wrote, a boy seems to have been generally regarded as something between a sport and a nuisance; and, in order to curb his high spirits, he was subjected to endless floggings and kept on a low diet. The present writer has been told by very old men that in their day every adult in a village, from the parson downward, felt himself licensed to thrash at his discretion any youngster of whose conduct he disapproved; and it was the fault of the stick, if he did not lay it on well. This want of sympathy, to put it mildly, pervaded all ranks of society, and was nowhere more pronounced than in our public schools, though, of course, there were exceptions. Dickens chose to turn the lime-light on the state of things that existed in some private schools. The picture of Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby* was unjust to the particular academy which it caricatured, but it opened a new page in the history of many schools where such atrocities were perpetrated.

The novelist was born at what was then 1 Mile End Terrace and is now 393 Commercial Road, Portsmouth, on February 7, 1812, which happened to be a Friday. He was christened, not quite so soon as the

Boys who Became Famous

infant Tennyson, but within a month of his birth, at the old parish church of Portsea, which goes by the name of St Mary's, Kingston. His father, who was employed in the Navy Pay-Office, did not perhaps know of the rubric which speaks of the first or second Sunday as the proper time for the ceremony. Dickens' memory is known to have been retentive, and must have been abnormal, if, as has been stated, he could recollect the house in which he was born and various circumstances connected with his babyhood, such as his nurse watching him, when not more than two years old, from "a low kitchen window almost level with the gravel walk," as he toddled with his sister Fanny about the "small front garden." But there has evidently been some confusion. Charles was hardly five months old when his parents moved from Mile End Terrace to Hawke Street. Their new abode had no 'small front garden,' but the garden at the back is commanded by the kitchen window, which is fitted with a broad old-fashioned seat. These particulars are not easy to reconcile; and we have, in fact, something like a composite photograph, the 'small front garden' belonging to Mile End Terrace and the kitchen window to Hawke Street.

In 1814 the father, John Dickens, was ordered to London, where he lived in lodgings; and in 1816 he was transferred to Chatham Dockyard. In the following year he and his family went to reside at 2 (now 11) Ordnance Road, Chatham, where, we are relieved to be able to say, they remained for four years. With amusing candour the novelist speaks

Charles Dickens

of himself as being at this time "a very queer, small boy." He received his first lessons in English, and rather later, in Latin, from his mother, but after a while he and his sister Fanny were made to trudge off to a preparatory day-school in Rome Lane. When a man, Dickens tried to find this place, but in vain—it had been supplanted by a new street. According to his friend and biographer, Forster, however, the search awoke a "not dim impression" that the school-room had been situated over a dyer's shop, that little Dickens went up steps to it, and in doing so not infrequently grazed his knees, and finally, that, in trying to scrape the mud off "a very unsteady little shoe," he generally got his leg over the scraper.

Among his acquaintances was Miss Lucy Stroughill, a golden-haired girl, who lived at No. 1. He called her his sweetheart. Doubtless also he knew Master James Budden, son of the landlord of the 'Red Lion,' who was monstrosly stout and served as the original of Joe the Fat Boy in the *Pickwick Papers*. Mr and Mrs John Dickens were on intimate terms with some people called Tribe, who kept the 'Mitre,' a fine old hostelry, and from time to time gave evening parties. On such occasions Charles helped to enliven the guests by singing solos, mostly old sea-songs, or joining his sister in duets, a dining-room table being used for an improvised concert-platform, on which the two children were mounted.

In 1821 Mr Dickens, finding that he must retrench, went to live at No. 18 St Mary's Place, which had "a plain-looking whitewashed plaster-front," and a

Boys who Became Famous

small garden before and behind. It stood next to a Baptist meeting-house called Providence Chapel, which was in charge of the Rev. William Giles. Mr Giles's son, who was also called William, had been educated at Oxford and was now a schoolmaster in Chatham. Fanny and Charles Dickens became his pupils, and very apt pupils they were. When Charles took the public by storm with *Pickwick*, Mr Giles, as a sign of appreciation, presented him with a silver snuff-box, on the lid of which were inscribed the words, "To the Inimitable Boz." Taking his cue from this, Dickens was for a long while in the habit of referring to himself in conversation with and letters to intimate friends as 'the Inimitable.' That snuff-box ought to have been preserved.

The little boy was fond of accompanying his school-fellows to the 'Lines,' where they witnessed sham-fights and siege-operations. At other times he would go for a stroll with his sister and nurse in the fields about Fort Pitt. His nurse's name was Mary Weller. She married Thomas Gibson, a shipwright in the dockyard, and died in 1888. She is supposed to have been, in some respects, the prototype of Peggotty in *David Copperfield*. Dickens recalls these happy days in his *Child's Story* :

"They had the merriest games that ever were played. . . . They had holidays, too, and 'twelfth-cakes,' and parties where they danced till midnight, and real theatres, where they saw palaces of real gold and silver rise out of the real earth, and saw all the wonders of the world at once. As to friends, they

Charles Dickens

had such dear friends, and so many of them that I want the time to reckon them up."

We have referred to *David Copperfield*. The hero of that novel was identical, in part, with Dickens himself. For one thing, David was born on a Friday; and, if you turn back, you will find that Charles was born on that day of the week. Applying to the novelist what he states of this favourite character, we learn that, as a child, he had "the finest toys in the world and the most astonishing picture-books." In a closet next to his bedroom was a small library containing the works of Fielding, Smollett, Defoe, Goldsmith, the *Arabian Nights* and *Tales of the Genii*; and these the boy read again and again with the heartiest enjoyment. "They kept alive my fancy," he said, "and my hope of something beyond that place and time . . . and did me no harm, for whatever harm was in some of them, was not there for me; I knew nothing of it." We are justified in supposing that he quotes from his own experience, if only because another passage, which now forms part of the story, was actually written some years before. It runs as follows:

"The picture always rises in my mind of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I, sitting on my bed, reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighbourhood, every stone in the church, and every foot in the churchyard had some association of its own in my mind connected with these books, and stood for some locality famous in them."

In an earlier chapter of the novel there are allusions

Boys who Became Famous

to the church, and a specially interesting one to the family pew: "Here is our pew in the church. What a high-backed pew! with a window near it, out of which our house can be seen, and *is* seen many times during the morning's service by Peggotty, who likes to make herself as sure as she can that it's not being robbed, or is not in flames."

The old churchyard was easily visible from an upper window in the side of the house, and here Charles and Fanny would often sit of a night gazing out upon the quiet spot and the star-lit sky overhead. In his pretty tale, *A Child's Dream of a Star*, Dickens makes mention of a church-spire and a graveyard, but we have not space for further quotations on the subject. You see how it all fits in.

In 1822 Mr Dickens was summoned to take up duties at Somerset House, and quitted Chatham for London with his wife and all his children save Charles, who was left for several weeks in the care of his schoolmaster, William Giles. At length Charles also had to depart, which he did by coach. There was no other inside passenger; the rain descended in torrents; and, as he consumed his sandwiches, the boy felt pretty miserable. Forster says that the name of the coach was 'The Commodore.' If so, it was the very conveyance in which Mr Pickwick and party travelled from Charing Cross to Rochester. The whip was old Cholmeley (or Chumley), an odd character who is said to have suggested Tony Weller. It is just possible, however, that Forster was mistaken, and that the real name of the coach was 'Blue-eyed Maid.'

Charles Dickens

We find an account of the journey in *Great Expectations*, which in other ways is fairly literal.

“The journey from our town to the Metropolis was a journey of about five hours. It was a little past mid-day when the four-horse stage-coach, by which I was a passenger got into the ravel of traffic frayed out about the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside, London. . . . The coach that carried me away, was melodiously called ‘Timpson’s Blue-Eyed Maid,’ and belonged to Timpson, at the coach office up-street.”

The coach-proprietor, as a matter of history, was called Simpson. As for the ‘Blue-Eyed Maid,’ it has been ascertained that there was such a coach, and it is mentioned in the third chapter of *Little Dorrit*.

The boy Dickens little dreamed, when he was deposited at the Cross Keys, what awful experiences were awaiting him in London. His father, who was steadily becoming poorer, now rented a cottage in Camden Town, where his next-door neighbour was a washer-woman; and he was unable to continue his son’s education. “As I thought,” Dickens once remarked, “in the little back-garret in Bayham Street, of all I had lost in losing Chatham, what would I have given—if I had anything to give—to have been sent to any other school, to have been taught something anywhere?”

The family did not remain for more than a few months in Bayham Street. Mr Dickens’ affairs were in such a desperate state that his wife deemed it high time to bestir herself, and, like Mrs Micawber, resolved on starting a “boarding establishment for young

Boys who Became Famous

ladies," with, it is to be regretted, much the same result. A new house was taken in Gower Street North, and Charles distributed "at a great many doors a great many circulars" temptingly descriptive of the advantages of the—proposed—school. All this energy was wasted, and worse. The resources of the family were drained dry, and John Dickens was arrested and marched off to the debtors' prison, the Marshalsea. This grim asylum for broken men has been demolished, but the name will be familiar to readers of *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit*, especially the latter story.

What was to become of Charles now? Well, most people have relatives, who, under such painful circumstances, do all they possibly can—at any rate, something. While the family were living in Bayham Street, they had as a lodger a Mr James Lamert, who was connected with them by ties of blood, and by ties of business with Warren's Blacking Manufactory, 30 Hungerford Stairs, Strand. Taking compassion on the poor little fellow, Lamert got him a job at the warehouse at a few shillings a week; and he was soon hard at work tying up and labelling pots of paste-blackening. He groaned in spirit at this drudgery, as an intolerable humiliation; and no surroundings could have been more gloomy and depressing. "The warehouse," he writes, "was the last house on the left-hand side of the way, at old Hungerford Stairs. It was a crazy, tumble-down old house, abutting, of course, on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscotted rooms and its rotten floors and stair-



The Boy Dickens orders a Glass of the very best Ale

Charles Dickens

case, and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up vividly before me, as if I were there again."

Charles now became a little 'man about town' and a connoisseur in taverns and pudding-shops. "There were two pudding-shops," he said, "between which I was divided, according to my finances." The better and more expensive was in a court at the back of St Martin's Church; the other was near the former Lowther Arcade. One evening he ventured into a public-house in Parliament Street, and ordered a glass of the very best ale with a good head to it. "The landlord," remarks the novelist, "looked at me, in return, over the bar from head to foot, with a strange smile on his face; and instead of drawing the beer, looked round the screen and said something to his wife, who came out from behind it, with her work in her hand, and joined him in surveying me. Here we stand, all three, before me now, in my study in Devonshire Terrace—the landlord in his shirt-sleeves, leaning against the bar window-frame, his wife looking over the little half-door, and I, in some confusion, looking up at them from outside the partition. They asked me a good many questions, as what my name was, how old I was, where I lived, how I was employed, etc., etc. To all of which, that I might commit nobody, I invented appropriate answers. They served me with the ale, though I expect it was not the strongest on the premises; and

Boys who Became Famous

the landlord's wife, opening the little half-door, and bending down, gave me a kiss that was half-admiring and half-compassionate, but all womanly and good."

Meanwhile the boy lodged in Lant Street, near Guy's Hospital, with a lame old gentleman and his wife, immortalized in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Here he was in touch with his unfortunate father, for whom he did little errands, more especially on Saturday nights, when he sometimes spent a penny on the show-van standing at the corner of Charlotte Street, "to see the fat pig, the wild Indian, and the little lady." He himself, by dint of circumstances, was converted into a show, for the blacking business was removed to Chandos Street, Covent Garden, and Charles Dickens had to handle the pots in a window facing the street, before a row of critical spectators.

The younger Dickens was a much better economist than his impecunious father. He was accustomed to divide up his money and place it in packets, each being his allowance for one day. It may not be amiss to point out that the novelist's portrait of Mr Micawber was suggested by his father, who remarked that 'if a man had twenty pounds a year, and spent nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence, he would be happy; but that a shilling spent the other way would make him wretched.' This very remark the philosopher's son put into the mouth of Mr Micawber.

How long Mr Dickens would have remained an

Charles Dickens

inmate of the Marshalsea Prison but for a happy providence, it is difficult to conjecture. His hard-hearted creditors refused a 'deed' he offered to them, probably because it promised a merely nominal settlement, and they seemed quite disposed to let him linger out his days in hateful confinement. A fairly large legacy from a relative, combined with a Government pension, placed him, however, in a position to pay his debts and turn his back on the gloomy precincts of the Marshalsea, where not only he, but his wife and children, with the exception of the eldest son, had been dragging a miserable and almost hopeless existence.

Before Charles went to live in Lant Street with the lame old gentleman, he lodged for a time with a Mrs Roylance, an elderly lady who had known better days, in Little College Street, Camden Town. On his release from prison, John Dickens took rooms for his family in her house, but they did not remain there. At first they appear to have gone to Hampstead, but from 1825 to 1829 they dwelt in Johnson Street, Somers Town, a dingy neighbourhood then and now.

James Lamert, Charles' benefactor, wished him to stick to the blacking business, but neither the boy nor his father was in favour of this course, and the result was a quarrel. Charles, indeed, looked back upon this period of his life with absolute horror and repugnance. "Until old Hungerford Market was pulled down," he says, "until old Hungerford Stairs were destroyed, and the very nature of the ground changed, I never

Boys who Became Famous

had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began."

At the age of twelve Charles resumed his education, being entered as a pupil at Wellington House Academy, at the north-east corner of Granby Street, Hampstead Road, where 'classical and commercial' subjects were taught under the supervision of a Welshman, Mr William Jones. The boy had had enough to sober him, and it is almost a relief to find that he was still capable of fun. He and his school-fellows used to fix themselves in Drummond Street, and, pretending to be poor, beg alms of passers-by, more particularly old ladies. We could wish that his fun had taken another form, nor can we quite commend his conduct at the morning services at Somers Chapel, now St Mary's Parish Church. An old school-fellow records that he "did not attend in the slightest degree to the service, but incited me to laughter by declaring his dinner was ready, and the potatoes would be spoiled, and, in fact, behaved in such a manner that it was lucky for us we were not ejected from the chapel."

After passing two years at the school Charles left, in 1826, with a poor reputation as a pupil. One day a friend said to his father, 'Pray, Mr Dickens, where was your son educated?' 'Why, indeed, sir—ha! ha!—he may be said to have educated himself,' was the reply.

At fourteen the future novelist made his *début* as a solicitor's clerk, and at sixteen forsook this occupation for that of a reporter in the law courts, which

Charles Dickens

he afterward exchanged for the 'gallery' of the House of Commons. He described himself as "the best and most rapid reporter ever known"—an estimate confirmed by others. After that he gradually drifted into authorship.

CHAPTER XVIII: *George Washington*

IN the American Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, it was laid down "that all men are created equal." Unless negroes were thought of as two-legged cattle, this assertion must have been accompanied by a mental reservation—'provided always that they are not descendants of Ham.' Otherwise there would have been no need for the great Civil War of the last generation, when many English people were weak enough to espouse the cause of the Southerners from a notion that they represented the aristocratic element in American society. Certainly, the possession of a pedigree was not undervalued in Virginia at the time of Washington's birth, and, his mother's family having been in trade, she was deemed rather beneath his father, who, if not in the first rank, was of sufficient standing. The matter is of no great importance now, but we are sure there are those to whom it will be a satisfaction to know that the most famous of all Americans was, by birth and breeding, a gentleman.

What is, perhaps, of more interest and significance is the fact that both he and his father were born on American soil, and on the same estate—Wakefield—lying between Bridges' and Pope's Creeks, in Westmoreland, and, to be precise, on the northern neck between the Potomac and the Rappahannock. This statement, as a whole, might not have been possible but for the circumstance that the father of the future

George Washington

President had purchased the estate from his brother John.

George Washington was the son of Augustine Washington and his second wife Mary (Ball). He was born on February 22, 1732, and baptized in Pope's Creek's Church. It was the custom for god-fathers to give silver cups, and George had no fewer than six, which, when he grew up, he used for punch. Augustine Washington was originally a planter and interested in iron mines, but later he became master of a ship and drove a profitable trade in transporting convicts and indentured servants from England. George's first schoolmaster was a convict named Groves, but more generally known as 'Hobby.' He was the sexton of Falmouth Church as well as an instructor of the young, so that, whatever offence he may have committed, he appears to have redeemed his character. (Here it should be observed that the Washingtons had moved up country to an estate then called Epsewasson, or Hunting Creek, and afterward Mount Vernon. In 1739 they were burnt out and went to reside at Stafford, on the east bank of the Rappahannock, where they remained until the death of the father.) George rode to the 'field-school' in front of a slave called Peter, until he was deemed old enough to have his own pony. Ponies are sometimes mischievous creatures, and George, to his mother's consternation, was occasionally thrown.

As for 'Hobby,' he was short, extremely good-natured and extremely superstitious. He lived in dread of 'black magic' being applied to him by the

Boys who Became Famous

negroes, and shared their belief that if a snake's head was cut off, its tail would live till it thundered ! 'Hobby' was not much good as a teacher. If he imparted a knowledge of the alphabet, that was about the extent of his services ; and he was far too kind-hearted to use violent means of correction. Mr Washington would have raised no objection to a moderate infliction of the rod, but 'Hobby' was a companionable person and preferred to regale his small friends with stories of his life in London and his more recent experiences as a grave-digger. Some of these tales were pretty gruesome and made their blood curdle.

Meanwhile George's elder brother, Lawrence, took part, as a young soldier, in the disastrous attack on Cartagena, and sent home exciting letters, which made George burn to follow his example. Wars between Europeans, or men of European descent, were only too frequent, but there was another possibility which the colonists could not banish from their thoughts, and that was the contingency of an Indian rising. Quite naturally, the games at 'Hobby's' school were coloured by the remarks let fall by the parents of the pupils. A stout lad called William Bustle posed as an Indian chief, and the other boys were divided into contending parties of red men and frontier farmers. In the woods they pulled each other's hair, which was then worn long, with some pretence of scalping ; and from the branches of trees they pelted each other with stones. One winter, Bustle struck George Washington in the eye with a

George Washington

snowball loaded with a stone. This proceeding was denounced as unfair, and George's mother wanted to have Bustle punished, but his father refused to interfere, and said that George must avenge his own quarrel. The ten-year-old boy inherited his sire's strength of body and hot temper, and, coming to blows with Bustle, gave him a severe thrashing. He refused to desist, even when Bustle cried craven.

In April 1743 George paid a visit to his cousins at Choptank, about thirty miles distant; and one evening, whilst they were at supper, Peter the negro appeared with the sad news that his master had been suddenly taken ill. The boy hastily returned home, where he found that his father was not only ill, but dying. He was led to the bedside of the good man, who, amidst his pain, kissed him and said, "Be good to your mother." He always was. The property was now divided, and George received as his share the farm at Stafford and half the land on Deep Run, with ten negro slaves.

After his father's death George enjoyed more freedom than ever, and would often slip off at night from his attendant Peter to roast ears of Indian corn in the cabins of the out-door slaves, which he had been strictly forbidden to enter, or to indulge in coon-hunts. When his mother was informed of his truanacies, she would sometimes laugh and at other times punish him beyond reason. She was a queer woman. In order that the servants might not have to work on Sunday, she would keep them up late on Saturday night, cooking. The result was that the tired blacks

Boys who Became Famous

went to sleep during the service, and, seeing this, Mrs Washington would rise from her seat, cross over to their part of the church, and poke them with her fan.

Under the tuition of a slave named Sampson, George became an expert horseman. One of the things he learnt from this black, who was *very* black, was never to get angry with a horse. This must have been a hard lesson for the boy. Sampson told him that he was like his father, and, when angry, turned first red and then pale. The old retainer is said to have belonged to the Mandingo tribe, the members of which were peculiarly sensitive to disgrace, and known to commit suicide if subjected to shame. He had never been whipped.

One Saturday, being a holiday, George repaired early in the morning to the stables and ordered the groom to saddle a hunter. He then rode to a meet of the fox-hounds four miles away, where the gentlemen—perhaps there were ladies too—greeted his arrival with good-natured chaff. They professed to be anxious whether he could keep on, and wondered if the horse knew that there was anybody on his back. This was George Washington's first hunt, and, riding well up with the hounds, he was in at the death of two foxes. On his way home, his horse became lame, and he jumped off and led him. Reaching the stable farm about midday, what did he see but the overseer, whip in hand, and apparently on the point of chastising Sampson, at whom he was swearing in good set terms? George ran up and snatched away

George Washington

the whip—only just in time, as the overseer told him that he had fully intended to make the slave smart for allowing his young master to take the horse, which had been sold. On discovering that the animal was lame, he got into a yet worse temper, but George insisted that no one was to blame but himself, and informed the overseer that he must beat him first. The latter answered that he should report the incident to Mrs Washington, but, whether he did or did not, nothing more was heard of the matter. Sampson's gratitude was most touching. He thanked George for interposing, declared that he did not know what it was to be beaten, and stated that such treatment would have meant his death. All this sounded strange to the boy, as it was a common practice to whip slaves, most of whom were hardened to it.

George's half-brothers, Lawrence and Augustine, now seem to have put their heads together, and both considered it high time that he should receive a better education. His mother tearfully protested, and George himself was not over eager to renounce his freedom and bid good-bye to his playmates. On the other hand, he was attracted by Lawrence's promise of a horse for his exclusive use, a pair of spurs, and new clothes from London, to include a scarlet coat. That scarlet coat was a very effective bait, as George was fond of show and did not like to go about less well-dressed than other gentlemen's sons. Accordingly, it was settled that he should go to live with his half-brother Augustine at Wakefield, the very house in which he had been born, and attend a school in the

Boys who Became Famous

neighbourhood. Peter accompanied his masters on the long ride to Pope's Creek, and was then sent home.

Oak Grove, where Mr Williams' school was situated, was four miles from Wakefield, and every day George rode forward and backward without an escort. He soon learnt to do sums creditably, and afterward displayed some aptitude for the higher branches of mathematics; but he was not so successful with history and geography, and proved a total failure in Latin. For years he was unable to master the intricacies of English spelling, and to the last his English composition lacked elegance, though he never failed to make his meaning plain and easily understood.

Out of school hours George enjoyed opportunities of sport such as fall to the lot of few lads of his age. He struck up an acquaintance with a slave named Appleby, whose business it was to keep the other negroes supplied with crabs, oysters, clams, and fish. Pope's Creek abounded with them, and it was one of the boy's chief pleasures to go off with Appleby sailing and rowing and searching for shell-fish. In the autumn he was his brother's companion, when Augustine shot ducks, geese, and swans, which flew in huge flocks over the little islands of Pope's Creek. George had no taste for music, and turned a deaf, but not an impolite, ear to Augustine's fiddling and his sister-in-law's singing. In the same way he turned a blind eye to their stock of books, feeling perhaps that the reading enforced at school sufficed. Presently, however, his schoolmaster gave him a book called

George Washington

The Youth's Companion, which took his fancy mightily. It was an eminently practical work, containing, among other things, directions for surveying land and drawing up deeds and conveyances—just the book, in fact, for a budding squire. Land-surveying became quite a passion with him. The official surveyor of Westmoreland, Mr Genn, allowed him to act as an unofficial *attaché*, and he learnt so much of the business as to surprise some of his friends and neighbours. Eventually he was articled to Mr Genn with a view to adopting the profession, but this was not until some years afterward, and in the interval he nearly went to sea, not, as has been sometimes stated, as a midshipman in the navy, but as an apprentice in the merchant service.

Mrs Washington was an excellent woman, but, it must be confessed, extremely trying from her habit of resisting every proposal for her son's benefit. She had parted with him with much reluctance, and was not satisfied until she had him at home with her again. After that the boy divided his time between his mother's house at Stafford and his brother Lawrence's at Mount Vernon. When at the former place he attended a school at Fredericksburg. The master was the Rev. James Marye, who was of Huguenot descent, and George had now a good chance of learning French. He neglected it, and was sorry ever afterward. During the week he boarded with a widow, who had several sons, big, rough fellows ; and for the first time George Washington encountered in these boys his equals in physical strength and

Boys who Became Famous

hardihood when pitting himself against them in jumping, and wrestling, and the 'Indian hug.'

At Mount Vernon George made the acquaintance of several members of the Fairfax family, including Lord Fairfax, who owned great estates in the valley, of which his cousin, William Fairfax, was the resident manager. His lordship took a deep interest in young Washington; and in one of her fits the boy's mother wrote to the nobleman, consulting him as to the advisability of sending George to the University of Oxford. The next day Lord Fairfax was riding with the lad, and told him about the letter, of which George knew nothing. He answered, however, that his mother was sure to change her mind, and for some time the old nobleman remained silent. At last he said, "Young man, this is your country; stay here. What do you want to do?" George replied that he would like to be surveyor on his lordship's lands, but Lord Fairfax thought him too young. Soon afterward he penned a candid epistle to Mrs Washington, in which he dissuaded her from sending her son to England, and dwelt upon various points in the boy's character and training—not omitting to say something about his being quickly, and sometimes unjustly, provoked.

George learnt to control his temper from a disagreeable incident that took place during one of his visits to Mount Vernon or rather at Belvoir, William Fairfax's place, where Lawrence and he were being entertained. One Sunday evening he yielded to the temptation of aiming his gun at a great flock of 'canvasback' ducks. He had reached the shore, and



Washington and the Negro

George Washington

was about to push off, when Peter warned him that his action would displease his brother and Mr Fairfax, and caught hold of the prow of the boat to detain him. George flew into a passion, and, raising one of the oars, struck his old friend on the head. Peter fell senseless, and for a few moments George thought he was dead. On recovering, the black staggered off, bleeding, to the slaves' quarters, whilst the boy, in a fright, returned to the house and told his brother what had happened. Lawrence was highly indignant, and remarked, 'This comes of your hot temper. Once our father nearly killed a man for a small matter, and that cured him; I hope this may cure you.' George made no reply, but set off to examine his victim, who was not really badly hurt, and laughingly observed, 'Master George, you hit mighty hard.'

Another story is too good not to be recorded. After he had joined Mr Genn, his professional duties brought him in contact with the Indians. Now Mr Genn told him that the Indians looked upon it as a great joke, when they shook hands with white men, to give them a painful squeeze. George remembered this warning, and, on being introduced to a chief called Big Bear, inflicted on him such a cruel grip that the brave uttered a piercing yell, while the other Indians rocked with laughter. We are not sure, by the way, that this anecdote is authentic, but if Dr Weir Mitchell has invented it, we forgive him in consideration of his having provided us with such a pleasant book as *The Youth of Washington*, which has all the charm of a romance.

CHAPTER XIX:

John Ruskin

SOME people appear to be curiously indifferent to the day, the month, and even the year of their birth. Searching about in the first volume of his *Præterita*, with its more than three hundred pages devoted to the period of youth, for a clear statement of Ruskin's birthday, we found none, but, as he tells us in one place that he was sixteen in 1835, there seemed to be some probability that he was born in 1819. This conjecture was confirmed by one or two works of reference, and may be accepted as correct. About everything else there is a fullness of information quite overwhelming to a writer who has only a few pages in which to say his say.

We hardly know whether to describe our present hero as one of Fortune's favourites with respect to his early years. In certain ways he was no doubt very lucky, as he was born to affluence and carefully shielded from every approach of pain; but material comfort, especially when combined with seclusion from the society of other boys, is apt to spell effeminacy. The young John Ruskin was tutored by his mother and undoubtedly coddled. In that sense he differs from every other character whose boyhood has been sketched in this volume. It is surprising that such lads should ever attain distinction, but they sometimes do. We know of an eminent man of letters, still living, who was brought up in precisely the same way.

Ruskin would never have enjoyed this easy lot,

John Ruskin

had it not been for the shrewdness and energy of his self-made father, who started as a clerk and rose to be a London wine-merchant, after paying off his father's considerable legacy of debts. The great writer's infancy was spent, for the most part, in Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, from the windows of which he gazed with admiration on "a marvellous iron post, out of which the water-carts were filled through beautiful little trap-doors, by pipes like boa-constrictors." He also found pleasure in tracing the squares and comparing the colours of his carpet, examining the knots in the wood of the floor, and counting the bricks in the opposite houses. John, however, was the nephew of a baker's wife at Croydon, whither the family occasionally repaired for a change, seeking renewed health on Duppas Hill and heather-clad Addington.

The boy took an enormous interest in the shop, the bakehouse and the crystal-spring at the back door, and was on the friendliest terms with his aunt's dog Towzer, which had been a vagrant, but was now sleek and respectable. His aunt was a kind of fairy godmother to little John, and to her and his 'baker-cousins' he was warmly attached. She was much more homely and kind than his mother, who at first would not allow him to have any toys. His aunt, unaware of this rule, or seeking to abolish it, gave him on one of his birthdays a Punch and Judy. The figures were dressed in scarlet and gold, and would dance, when tied to the leg of a chair. Mrs Ruskin was not to be moved. She did not go so far as to

Boys who Became Famous

reject the present, but John was informed that it was not good for him, and the splendid Punch and Judy, which would have afforded him so much fun, vanished from his sight.

As time went on, this rule was relaxed. Beginning with a bunch of keys, he was promoted to a cart and a ball, and when he was five or six, to two boxes of wooden bricks. But, broadly speaking, he was expected to amuse himself as he did in the ways before described.

Those visits to Croydon were not the only breaks in a life which to most boys would have been extremely monotonous. One of Mr Ruskin's partners was a Kentish squire named Telford, who was the possessor of a fine large equipage called a 'chariot,' and drawn by two horses. Every summer Mr Ruskin left London and went on a tour, that lasted two months, through England and Wales and part of Scotland, in order to call on country customers. At such times, Mr Telford lent him his roomy 'chariot,' so that he was able to take with him not only his wife and son, but the old family nurse Anne, who kept guard over the luggage. It is easy to imagine what a treat these summer holidays must have been to the three-year-old boy. The carriage was hung so high that he had a perfect view of the country over the stone dykes and hedges, and when there was nothing particular to look at, he pretended to be the post-boy—there was no coachman—and whipped his father's legs as if they were horses. At first he was obliged to do this with his hand only, but after a while his indulgent

John Ruskin

parent gave him a silver-mounted postillion's whip, which he learnt to handle in thorough professional style.

In the course of these tours little John visited nearly every nobleman's house in the country, and his chief regret and wonderment was that the lords and ladies who owned the castles were so seldom visible. Still, he feasted his eyes on the galleries and gardens, and listened breathlessly to such stories as the major-domo, or housekeeper, had to tell concerning the historic mansions.

Mention has been made of Mr Telford. That gentleman—and, according to Ruskin, he *was* a gentleman, the beau ideal of a country squire—was kind enough to give him a new illustrated edition of Roger's *Italy*, containing many of Turner's drawings. This was Ruskin's first sight of Turner's work, about which he was to write so much and so enthusiastically. A biographer naturally seizes on a circumstance like this as having an important bearing on the after-life of his hero, but Ruskin rather pooh-poohs it. "The essential point to be noted, and accounted for," he says, "was that I could understand Turner's work, when I saw it—not by what chance, or in what year, it was first seen." Still, he owns that 'papa and mamma' put it down to poor Mr Telford that their son became an enthusiast on Turner.

The wine-merchant was much pre-occupied with business, and left his wife to deal with John. She was not exactly what is termed a fond mother, and if he cried or was disobedient or tumbled on the

Boys who Became Famous

stairs, she whipped him. It was she also who saw to his education, of which we do not hear much until the family removed to Herne Hill, when John was about four years of age. One strange thing in the boy was the manner in which he learnt to read. His mother found she could not teach him to read by syllables, although he could learn whole sentences by heart and afterward point out every word in the page. His would-be instructress gave up the task as useless, whereupon John solved the difficulty on his own lines, and, when five years old, was sending to the circulating library for the second volumes of works of fiction after, presumably, digesting the first.

The books he read for recreation were *Dame Wiggins of Lee*, *The Peacock at Home*, and other nursery rhymes; Miss Edgeworth's *Frank* and *Harry and Lucy*, and Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues*. He also wrote and illustrated poems and narratives based on those productions, copying them out in printer's characters and forming them into a book. This was in his seventh year. After he was ten, if not before, he plunged into Pope's *Iliad* and the *Waverley Novels*, which his father was accustomed to read aloud in the evenings. Ruskin depreciates the importance of Roger's *Italy* in creating a taste for Turner, but he makes no attempt to belittle the influence of Homer and Scott on his political opinions. Harken to this: "I am, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school—Walter Scott's school, that is to say, and Homer's. I name these two out of the numberless great Tory writers, because they were my

John Ruskin

own two masters. I had Walter Scott's novels and the *Iliad* (Pope's translation) for constant reading when I was a child on week-days ; on Sunday, their effect was tempered by *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* ; my mother having it deeply in her heart to make an evangelical clergyman of me."

Mrs Ruskin spared no effort to guide or drive her son into the service of religion, and her chief notion of education was to implant in his mind a sound knowledge of the Bible, which he had to read through aloud about once a year. He had likewise to commit long chapters to memory, and all the old Scottish metrical versions ; and his mother was very particular about the way he repeated them. Slipshod, perfunctory renderings would not do at all ; if a sentence was wrongly accented, he had to say it again, and sometimes, again and again. Ruskin's deliberate opinion was that his mother's system of education, which was continued right up to the time when he went to Oxford, was highly beneficial. "To that discipline—patient, accurate, and resolute—I owe," he said, "not only a knowledge of the book, which I find occasionally serviceable, but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature."

Naturally, it was a deep disappointment to Mrs Ruskin as well as to her husband, that, in spite of all her pains, John did not become a clergyman. When he was a boy he used sometimes to preach a very brief sermon over the red sofa cushions in imitation of the Rev. Mr Howell, but that seems to have been his

Boys who Became Famous

nearest approach to embracing the clerical profession. Much later, when Ruskin had adopted heretical views on art, to which he was seeking to convert the public, his father and a sympathetic artistic friend bemoaned the misapplication of his powers. 'Yes,' said the former, with tears in his eyes, 'he would have been a bishop.' Mrs Ruskin supplemented the Bible lessons by teaching her son Adam's *Latin Grammar*. Altogether, when one comes to think of it, she was a wonderful woman; her mother was the landlady of the King's Head, Croydon, and her father a jolly sailor-man. But she had been carefully educated.

The wine-merchant's only sister, Jessie, was the wife of a tanner at Perth, or rather his widow, for it was only after the tradesman's death that John spent much time with her. His life in Scotland was happy but uneventful, but once on his return to London after the summer holidays he met with an adventure which proves that, although, like young Achilles, he passed his days with women and girls, he had something of Achilles' nerve. During his absence a black Newfoundland had been introduced at Herne Hill, and was on his trial as a watch-dog. John, then about five years old, was taken to the stable by the servant-man Thomas, who had received a strict injunction not to let the boy come within the radius of Lion's chain. Thomas, to prevent any accident, carried his charge in his arms, but, yielding to the boy's entreaty, stooped down so that he might pat the dog. Lion, who was busily engaged with a bone, resented the interruption by flying at his small visitor

John Ruskin

and biting a piece out of his lip. John bore this infliction with calm fortitude, and pleaded that Lion might not be dismissed. But Lion was, and his victim was obliged to keep his mouth shut for some time so that the wound might heal. He did not murmur. ‘Mamma,’ said he, ‘though I can’t speak, I can play upon the fiddle.’

Young Ruskin’s fiddling was poor; indeed, he never shone as a violinist—nor as a drummer. When he was about eight or nine years old, he missed a chance of showing what he could do in that direction. Whilst the family was staying at Tunbridge Wells, a number of officers dined together at the Sussex.

“After the military dinner there was military music, and by the connivance of waiters, Anne and I got in, somehow, mixed up with the dessert. I believe I was rather a pretty boy then, and dressed in a not wholly civilian manner, in a sort of laced and buttoned surtout. My mind was extremely set on watching the instrumental manœuvres of the band—with admiration of all, but burning envy of the drummer.

“The colonel took notice of my rapt attention, and sent an ensign to bring me round to him; and, after getting, I know not how, at my mind in the matter, told me I might go and ask the drummer to give me his lovely round-headed sticks, and he would. I was in two minds to do it, having good confidence in my powers of keeping time. But the dismal shyness conquered—I shook my head woefully, and my musical career was blighted. No one will ever know what I could then have brought out of that drum;

Boys who Became Famous

or (if my father had perchance taken me to Spain) out of a tambourine."

It would have been no great wonder if his father *had* taken him to Spain, as before he was sixteen John Ruskin had seen a good part of the Continent—France, Italy, and Switzerland. Moreover, he had been sent at last to school, where, it is surprising to learn, he was not bullied—not even chaffed. "Finding me," he says, "in all respects what boys could only look upon as an innocent, they treated me as I suppose they would have treated a girl." What exemplary youths !

CHAPTER XX:

Walter Scott

IT is an odd coincidence that the two most popular authors at the beginning of the last century should have been both lame. What the consequences were in the case of Byron, has been stated at length elsewhere. Walter Scott may not have been so great a poet, but he had certainly a more healthy mind than the romantic peer who displaced him as chief bard. Physically, however, lameness was as troublesome to the one as to the other—especially in the days of their youth, with which we are here primarily concerned.

The author of *Waverley* and many another novel, which, we have reason to believe, are less read by the present generation of boys than such spirited work deserves, was the son of Walter Scott, a Writer to the Signet, and Anne, daughter of Dr John Rutherford, Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh. Few people, perhaps, not of Scottish origin, would be able to say off-hand what 'a Writer to the Signet' means, but we shall be somewhere near the truth if we conceive of the poet-novelist's father as a high-class solicitor and most respectable man. He had about a dozen children, but only five lived to grow up. Walter, who was fourth of the survivors, was born in a house at the head of the College Wynd, Edinburgh, on August 15, 1771.

At his first coming into the world, the younger Walter was an extremely healthy child, sound in wind

Boys who Became Famous

and limb, but he was almost immediately exposed to grave peril, since his first nurse was suffering from consumption—a fact which she foolishly and criminally concealed, until one day she secretly consulted Dr Black, Professor of Chemistry, who sounded an alarm. Walter's next attendant was a peasant-woman, who, in after-days was proud of her 'laddie' as 'a grand gentleman.' Everything now went on smoothly, except that the youngster had to be chased about the room in the evening, having a strong objection to being caught and put to bed. At eighteen months he lost this agility for ever. When children cut their molars, or large teeth, the process is often accompanied by fever, which, in Walter's case, lasted three days. On the fourth day, when he was placed in his bath, it was found that he had no power in his right leg. The weakness was not due to dislocation or strain; and ordinary remedies, such as blisters, proved useless. The doctors were baffled. The best suggestion that Dr Rutherford could make was that Walter should be removed into the country, where he would have the benefit of the fresh air and more natural conditions of life. Accordingly, he was sent to a farm-house called Sandy-Knowe.

There a new and unforeseen danger threatened the infant's existence. As it was not convenient for his mother to go with him, Walter was consigned to the care of a maid, who had lost her heart to a good-for-nothing fellow at Edinburgh, and pined to return to the city. Mrs Scott insisted on her staying at the farm-house, with the result that the girl took

Walter Scott

a violent dislike to Walter as the cause of her banishment. Frantic with rage and disappointment, she carried the baby up to the Craigs with the wicked design of cutting his throat with her scissors and burying him in the moss. Something caused her to relent, and, on reaching the homestead, she confessed to the housekeeper, old Alison Wilson, the crime she had meditated and so nearly committed. The girl was dismissed and became a lunatic.

As late as the year 1836, there were people still living who could remember the coming of the lame, sweet-tempered 'bairn' to Sandy-Knowe, and how the young ewe-milkers delighted to carry him on their backs among the crags, where he soon knew every sheep and lamb by the head-marks as well as any of them. He formed a warm attachment to an 'aged hind' called 'Auld Sandy Ormiston,' who was known as 'the Cow-bailie,' and, besides ruling the large cattle, was the chief superintendent of the flocks. The old man would set him astride on his shoulder in the morning, allow him to roll about in the grass, and when he wished to go home, sound a peculiar note on his whistle, as a signal to the maids in the house below. Sir Walter told his friend, Mr Skene of Rubislaw, that "the sort of fellowship he thus formed with the sheep and lambs had impressed his mind with a degree of affectionate feeling toward them which had lasted throughout life." It is recorded that one day he was forgotten among the crags when a thunderstorm broke out. Suddenly his aunt remembered him, and ran out of the house to fetch him. She found

Boys who Became Famous

him lying on his back, clapping his hands, and crying, at every flash of the lightning, 'Bonny ! bonny !'

Sandy-Knowe was the residence of Walter's paternal grandfather, a venerable old man with silvery hair, who, like all his relations, was grieved that the boy should be lame. Some ingenious person suggested a strange cure—namely, that whenever a sheep was killed, the boy should be stripped and swathed in the skin of the animal, whilst still warm. In this 'Tartar-like habiliment' Walter lay on the floor of the little parlour, whilst his grandfather urged him to try to crawl. Sometimes another old gentleman, Sir George Macdougall, a distant relation of the Scotts, would be present. "I still recollect him," writes the novelist, "in his old-fashioned military habit (he had been colonel of the Greys) with a small cocked hat, deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet to induce me to follow it. The benevolent old soldier and the infant wrapped in his sheepskin would have afforded an odd group to uninterested spectators."

Memories of the last Jacobite rising were then fresh in the country-side, and gruesome stories were told of the cruelties exercised after the battle of Culloden. Among the victims of 'Butcher' Cumberland were some of Walter's kindred, whose execution had been witnessed by the husband of one of his aunts, a farmer named Curle. Old songs and legends of Border raids were frequently on the lips of his

Walter Scott

grandmother, and these too must have helped to form his taste and decide his future calling. He learnt by heart the ballad of Hardy Knute, which he was in the habit of bawling, to the deep vexation of almost the only visitor to the house, Dr Duncan, the clergyman of the parish. "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is," he complained.

On the whole, Walter's stay in the country did him much good, and he gradually learnt to stand, to walk, and even to run. But his right leg was shrunk, and it was thought advisable to take him to Bath and try the effect of the waters. He spent about a year in that fashionable city under the care of his aunt, who was presently joined by her brother, Captain Robert Scott. Captain Scott took Walter to the theatre, and during the performance of *As You Like It* the boy was so scandalized at the quarrel between Oliver and Orlando that he screamed out, 'Ain't they brothers?' An old dame kept a day-school near their lodgings, and she taught the child his A B C. Sir Walter pays her the compliment of saying that he never had a more regular teacher, but she only had him as a pupil for one quarter, if so long. His aunt, to some extent, made up the deficiency.

Returning to Sandy-Knowe, Walter 'whiled away' the time till he was eight, when he passed some weeks at Prestonpans for a course of sea-bathing in the hope that it might mend his lameness. There he met with the original of Captain Dalgetty in *The Legend of Montrose*, who had been in the German wars

Boys who Became Famous

and was fond of repeating stories of military exploits, to which Walter was an attentive listener. After that the boy was transported to his father's house in George Square, Edinburgh, and this was his permanent abode till he married in 1797.

In 1778 he was sent to the High School, but did not make any great figure there. He was very popular, however, with the boys, although his lameness prevented him from excelling in their games. They would often gather around him at 'Lucky' Brown's fireside, and hang on his lips as he poured forth endless tales. He had also a tutor at home—a Mr James Mitchell—who was a Puritan fanatic, and had given up a good living in a seaport town because he could not convince people of the sin of setting sail on a Sunday. Walter was a High Tory, and the two were continually arguing, although always in an amicable fashion.

About this time occurred the famous episode of 'Green-breeks,' related in an appendix to *Waverley*, which will be best given in Sir Walter's own words :

"The author's father residing in George Square, in the southern side of Edinburgh, the boys belonging to that family, with others in the Square, were arranged into a sort of company, to which a lady of distinction presented a handsome set of colours. Now this company or regiment, as a matter of course, was engaged in weekly warfare with the boys inhabiting the Crosscauseway, Bristo Street, the Potterrow—in short, the neighbouring suburbs. These last were chiefly of the lower rank, but hardy loons, who threw



Walter Scott's First Introduction to Percy's "Reliques"

Walter Scott

stones to a hair's-breadth, and were very rugged antagonists at close quarters. The skirmish sometimes lasted a whole evening, until one party or the other was victorious, when, if ours were successful, we drove the enemy to their quarters, and were usually chased back by the reinforcements of bigger lads who came to their assistance. If, on the contrary, we were pursued, as was often the case, into the precincts of our square, we were in turn supported by our elder brothers, domestic servants, and similar auxiliaries.

"It followed from our frequent opposition to each other, that though not knowing the names of our enemies we were yet well acquainted with their appearance, and had nick-names for the most remarkable of them. One very active and spirited boy might be considered as the principal leader in the cohort of the suburbs. He was, I suppose, thirteen or fourteen years old, finely made, tall, blue-eyed, with long fair hair, the very picture of a youthful Goth. This lad was always first in the charge, and last in the retreat—the Achilles, at once, and the Ajax, of the Crosscauseway. He was too formidable to us not to have a cognomen, and, like that of a knight of old, it was taken from the most remarkable part of his dress, being a pair of old green livery breeks, which was the principal part of his clothing; for, like Pentapolin, according to Don Quixote's account, Green-breeks, as we called him, always entered the battle with bare arms, legs and feet.

"It fell, that once upon a time, when the combat

Boys who Became Famous

was at the thickest, this plebeian champion headed a sudden charge, so rapid and furious, that all fled before him. He was several paces before his comrades, and had actually laid his hands on the patrician standard, when one of our party, whom some misjudging friend had entrusted with a *couteau de chasse*, or hanger, inspired with a zeal for the honour of the corps worthy of Major Sturgeon himself, struck poor Green-breeks over the head, with strength sufficient to cut him down. When this was seen, the casualty was so far beyond what had ever taken place before that both parties fled different ways, leaving poor Green-breeks, with his bright hair plentifully dabbled in blood, to the care of the watchman, who (honest man) took care not to know who had done the mischief. The bloody hanger was flung into one of the Meadow ditches, and solemn secrecy was sworn on all hands ; but the remorse and terror of the actor were beyond all bounds, and his apprehension of the most dreadful character.

“The wounded hero was for a few days in the Infirmary, the case being only a trifling one. But though enquiry was strongly pressed on him, no argument could make him indicate the person from whom he had received the wound, though he must have been perfectly well known to him. When he was recovered and dismissed, the author and his brothers opened a communication with him, through the medium of a popular gingerbread baker, of whom both parties were customers, in order to tender a subsidy in name of smart-money. The sum would

Walter Scott

excite ridicule were I to name it ; but sure I am, that the pockets of the noted Green-breeks never held as much money of his own. He declined the remittance, saying that he would not sell his blood ; but at the same time reprobated the idea of being an informer ; which, he said, was *clam*, *i.e.* base or mean. With much urgency he accepted a pound of snuff for the use of some old woman—aunt, grandmother, or the like—with whom he lived. We did not become friends, for the *bickers* were more agreeable to both parties than any more pacific amusement, but we conducted them ever after under mutual assurances of the highest consideration for each other.”

We had marked some other circumstances in the early history of the Wizard of the North as worthy of mention, but we fear that after this sensational narrative they would strike the reader as an anti-climax. We shall therefore conclude with an expression of regret that Walter’s aristocratic sentiments were rather too pronounced. On leaving school for college, he found that almost all his fellow-students had some knowledge of Greek, whereas he had none, and was foolish enough to profess contempt for the language. A youth called Archibald, an excellent Greek scholar, who died early, paid him a visit in George Square, and expostulated with him, telling him that he was known as the *Greek Blockhead*, and advising him to mend his ways whilst there was time. Walter, though he responded civilly, resented this intrusion, largely because Archibald’s father was an innkeeper. The young fellow had not the wit to per-

Boys who Became Famous

ceive that the conversation was distasteful, and generously offered his help by day and night until his acquaintance was abreast with the foremost in his class. Walter Scott, however, could not subdue his stubborn pride, and declined the proposition. The two parted never to meet again, and Walter lost his last chance of becoming a Greek scholar. It was a pity.

CHAPTER XXI: *Samuel Langhorne Clemens*

LITTLE Sam Clemens would have been much surprised to hear himself addressed as 'Mark Twain,' an old river term, a leadsman's call, signifying two fathoms. He was no longer little when he adopted the term as a pen-name; and in the opinion of his biographer, Mr Albert Bigelow Paine, chose the greatest pen-name ever used. There may be a doubt about that, but Mr Paine is pleasantly enthusiastic. Elsewhere he calls his hero "the foremost American-born author—the man most characteristically American in every thought and word and action of his life."

Coincidences are not uncommon in human affairs. The elder Lawrence, the elder Dickens, and the elder Watts were all shiftless, incompetent individuals; and the elder Andersen, so far as his humble position permitted him to show it, was of the same genus. Mark Twain's father was equally 'at sea' in this present evil world, and kept changing his occupation and place of abode, as such people frequently do. We see him at one time a hopeful speculator in vast tracts of undeveloped lands in Tennessee; at another, a small storekeeper at Florida, Missouri. But the calling to which he always returned was that of a lawyer and judge. By a judge is meant a paid justice of the peace, whose services were requited, like those of our coroners, by fees. John Marshall Clemens had inherited a few negroes; and, when particularly hard

Boys who Became Famous

up, he would sell one of them as he might a horse or family picture.

Samuel Clemens had several brothers and sisters, whose advents helped to disorganize still more their parents' finances. Sam was their fifth child, and born at Florida on November 30th, 1835. Among the companions of his infancy was Jennie, the housegirl, and Uncle Ned, a man of all work. They were both negroes, and in the evenings they delighted to regale Sam and the other children with the strange myths of their race by the great open hearth. One of Uncle Ned's stories, which he related in appropriately sepulchral tones, was "The Golden Arm," of which Mr Paine supplies the following version :

"Once 'pon a time there was a man, and he had a wife, and she had a' arm of pure gold ; and she died, and they buried her in the graveyard ; and one night her husband went and dug her up and cut off her golden arm and tuck it home ; and one night a ghost all in white come to him ; and she was his wife ; and she says :

" ' W-h-a-r-r's my golden arm ? W-h-a-r-r's my golden arm ? W-h-a-r-r's my g-o-lden arm ? ' "

The culmination came with a pounce on one of the group, a shake of the shoulders, and a shout of—

" ' You've got it ! ' *and she tore him all to pieces.* "

One of the greatest treats of the Clemens children was to visit the farm of Uncle John Quarles, where they came in contact with more negroes. Every day they went to see a white-headed old woman, who was bed-

Samuel Langhorne Clemens

ridden and lived in one of the cabins on the farther side of the orchard. This venerable creature was reputed to be a thousand years old, and it was said that she had talked with Moses. During the sojourn in the Wilderness she had been ruined in health, and the shock of seeing Pharaoh drown had left its mark upon her in the form of a bald spot on her head. She was a wise old dame, knowing how to counteract spells and keep witches at a distance ; and the negroes, who believed all this, thought no end of her.

Sam was about five years old when his father and mother removed to Hannibal, a much larger town than Florida and one hundred miles from St Louis. Mark Twain speaks of it as "the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer morning . . . the great Mississippi, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along ; . . . the dense forest away on the other side." The boy was now deemed old enough to go to school, and he was sent to Miss Horr's, where children of both sexes were taught their A B C and simple arithmetic up to long division. Little Sam was always mischievous, and at once made it his business to try Miss Horr's patience, with the result that he was ordered to set forth and fetch a stick for his own back. Naturally, the errand was embarrassing, but seeing some shavings outside a cooper's shop, he picked one up and, re-entering the school, presented it to the offended mistress. Of course, this pretence did him no good, and, a schoolfellow having been sent for a switch of the proper sort, Sam received a sound

Boys who Became Famous

thrashing. After that, he felt a repugnance for school, and told his mother that, when he grew up, he intended to be a pirate or Indian and drown or scalp Miss Horr.

Sam's notions of religion were mainly confined to the fear of a terribly hot place appointed for naughty little boys, who disobeyed their parents and did things which their consciences taught them to be wrong. One day, however, Miss Horr, in the course of the Scripture reading, came to the text, " Ask and ye shall receive " ; and Sam thought the experiment worth making. It so happened that the girl sitting immediately in front of him was the baker's daughter, and he knew that she was in the habit of bringing gingerbread to school with her, although, on that particular morning, none of it was within view. However, he prayed for it, and on opening his eyes, lo and behold ! a morsel of the coveted dainty was on the desk before him. Firmly persuaded of the efficacy of prayer, he thought he was now in a fair way to obtain everything he desired. Accordingly, the next morning he prayed for more gingerbread, and with yet greater earnestness on the third and fourth mornings, but his supplications were vain. So he informed his mother that he didn't believe in saying prayers and was never going to do it again. The good woman was horrified. ' I'll make you a whole pan of gingerbread, better than that,' she said ; and it is to be hoped that she kept her word.

After that the boy attended several schools, and was eventually promoted to the principal academy—Mr

Samuel Langhorne Clemens

Cross's in the Square. At all these places he formed acquaintances, some of them not very desirable for a judge's son. One of his chums was Tom Blankenship, son of Ben Blankenship, who was styled *par excellence* the 'town drunkard.' Tom himself is described as "a ruin of rags, a river-rat," and his company was a forbidden luxury to Master Sam—forbidden, but indulged in all the same. Other friends were John Briggs and Will Bowen. The four composed a band of youthful marauders, which raided orchards and melon patches in defiance of dogs and negro patrols. Often these expeditions were conducted by water, in boats borrowed without leave from their owners. This arrangement was somewhat inconvenient, and they came to the conclusion that it would be better to have a boat of their own. So, instead of returning a borrowed boat, they concealed it for a time up Bear Creek, and repainted it another colour. The owner often saw it pass and, struck by its resemblance to his lost craft, would have claimed it, only that *his* boat had been painted red.

These performances were hardly reconcilable with a due regard for religion ; and, indeed, the young rogues not only absented themselves from church, but made attendance at the means of grace something of an adventure for those of pious inclinations. Wending their way up the steep acclivity of Holliday's Hill, they amused themselves by detaching from the soil large stones and causing them to bound with frightful velocity into the road, right in the path of people who were driving to church. The frequency of these

Boys who Became Famous

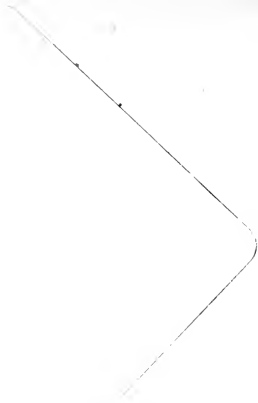
incidents, combined with the culprits' abstention from public worship, excited suspicion, and the 'Patterollers' (river police) were set to watch. The boys thereupon forsook Holliday's Hill, and by and by the 'Patterollers' were withdrawn. The youngsters celebrated their retirement by disengaging a rock said to have been as large as an omnibus, which hurtled down the steep and headed straight for a negro driving a cart. Fortunately it encountered an obstacle that sent it flying over the terrified charioteer, and it alighted in some soft earth on the other side of the road, where for nearly forty years it remained a landmark.

Hannibal was a rough place, and it may be questioned whether many young boys ever witnessed so many tragedies as Sam Clemens. Here are a few recorded by Mr Paine. "Once Little Sam—he was still Little Sam then—saw an old man shot down on the main street at noonday. He saw them carry him home, lay him on the bed, and spread on his breast an open family Bible, which looked as heavy as an anvil. He thought, if he could only drag that great burden away, the poor old dying man would not breathe so heavily. He saw a young emigrant stabbed with a bowie-knife by a drunken companion, and noted the spurt of life-blood that followed; he saw two young men try to kill their uncle, one holding him, while the other snapped repeatedly an Allen revolver which failed to go off."

Our space is exhausted, but if the reader can obtain a copy of Mr Paine's *Mark Twain*, he will find much

Samuel Langhorne Clemens

appetising matter and be amply rewarded. But it may be as easy—easier, perhaps—to procure Mark Twain's own tales—*The Gilded Cage*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, which are based on reminiscences of his own early years.



12
ac

